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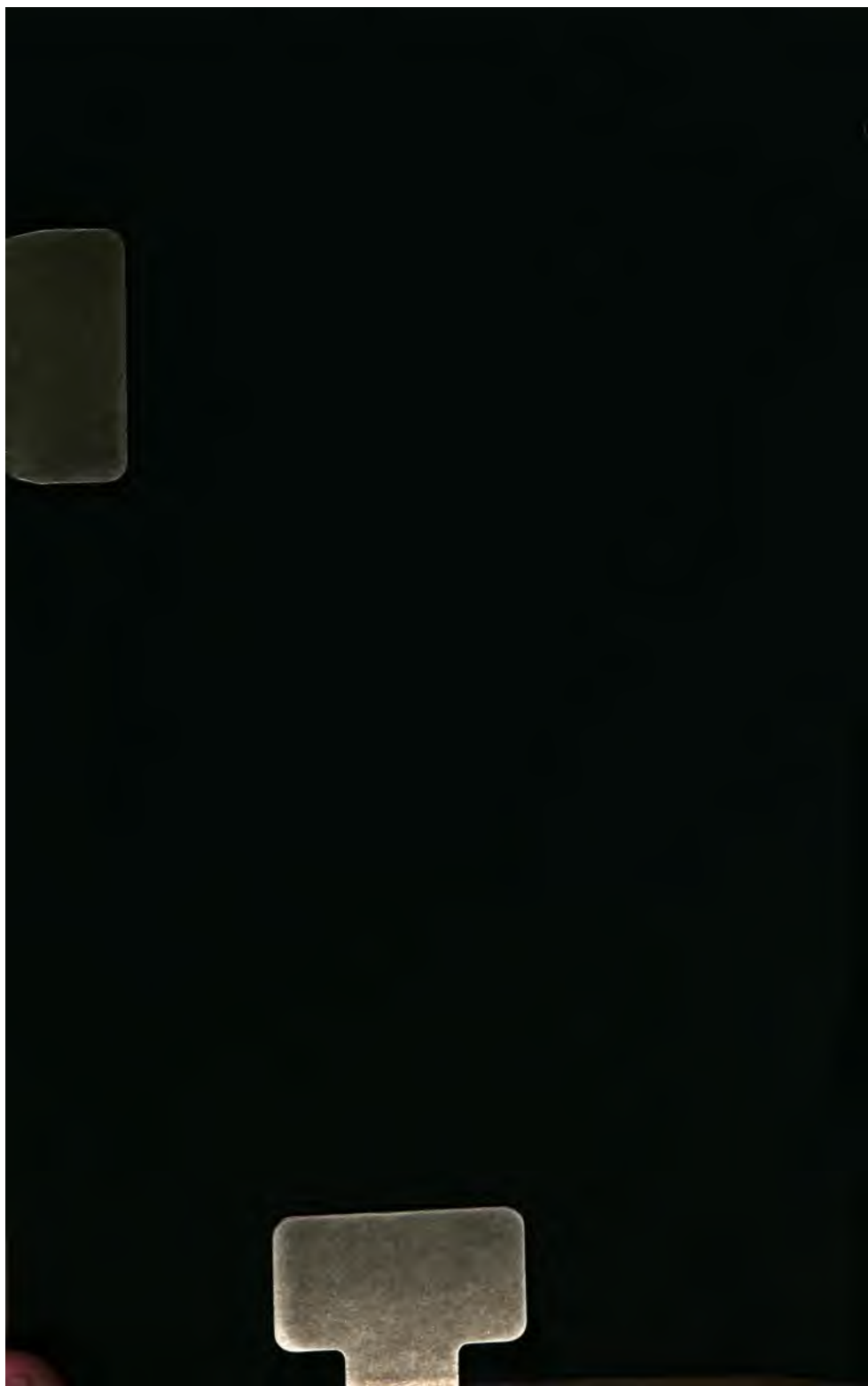
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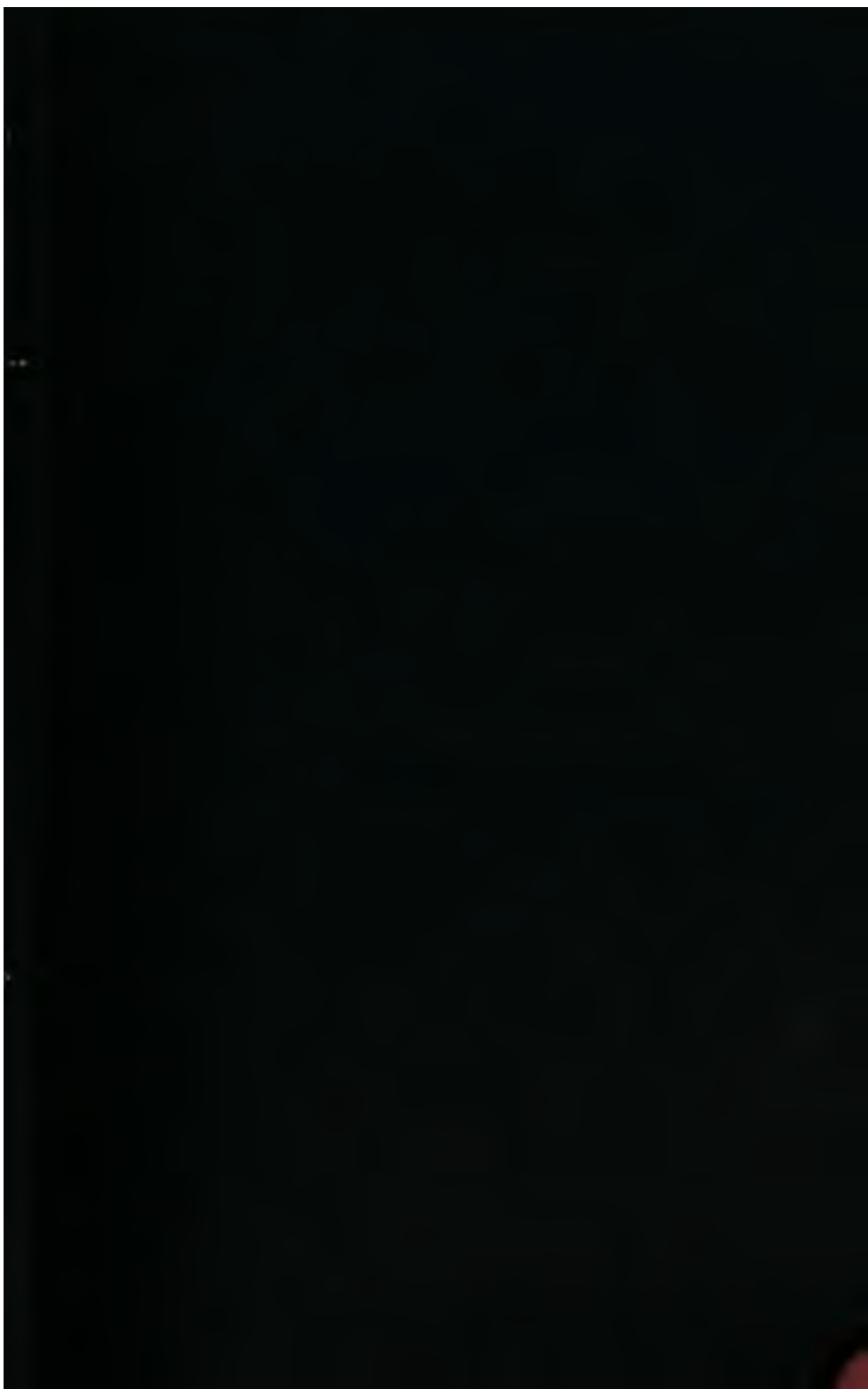
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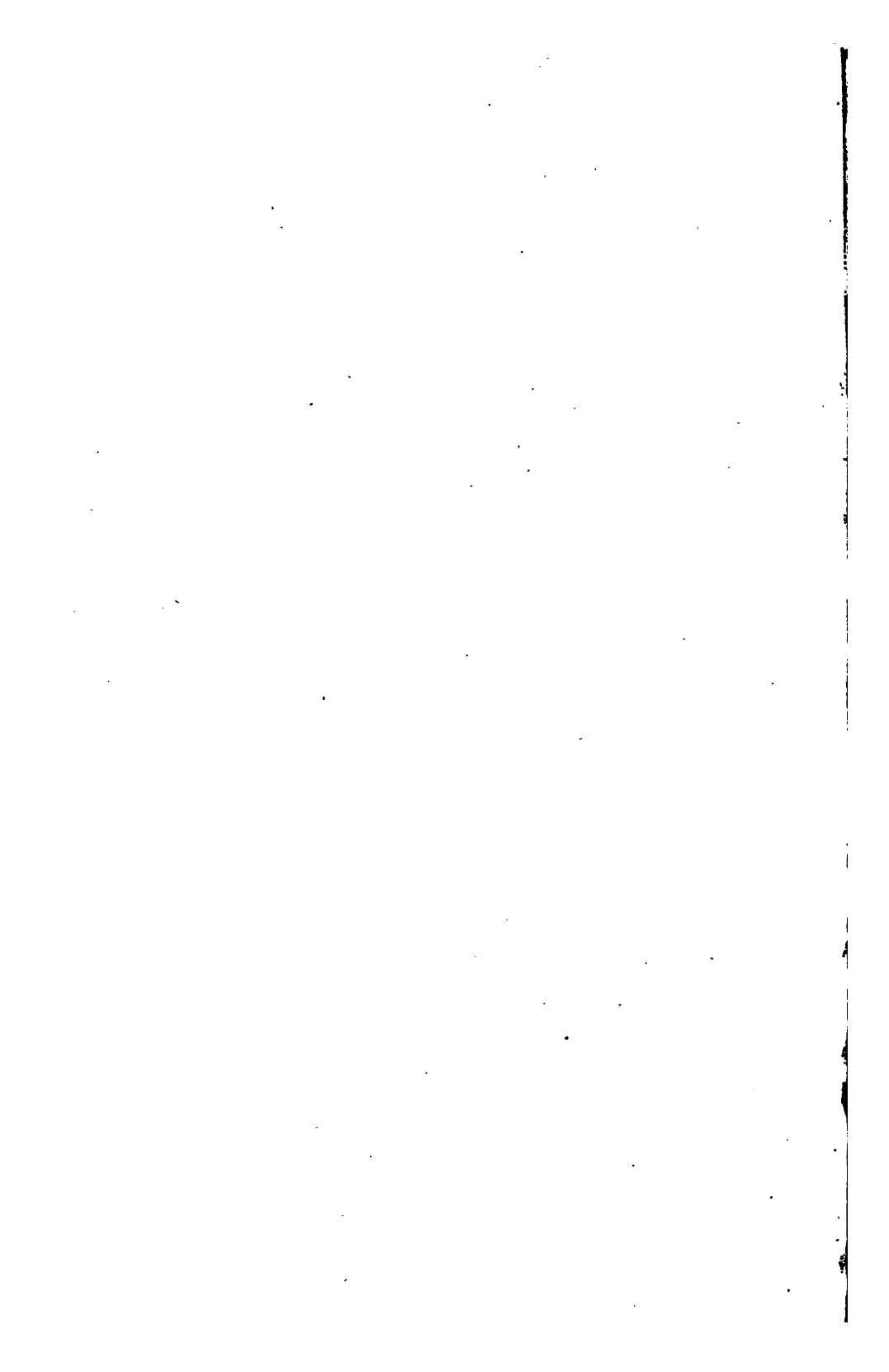
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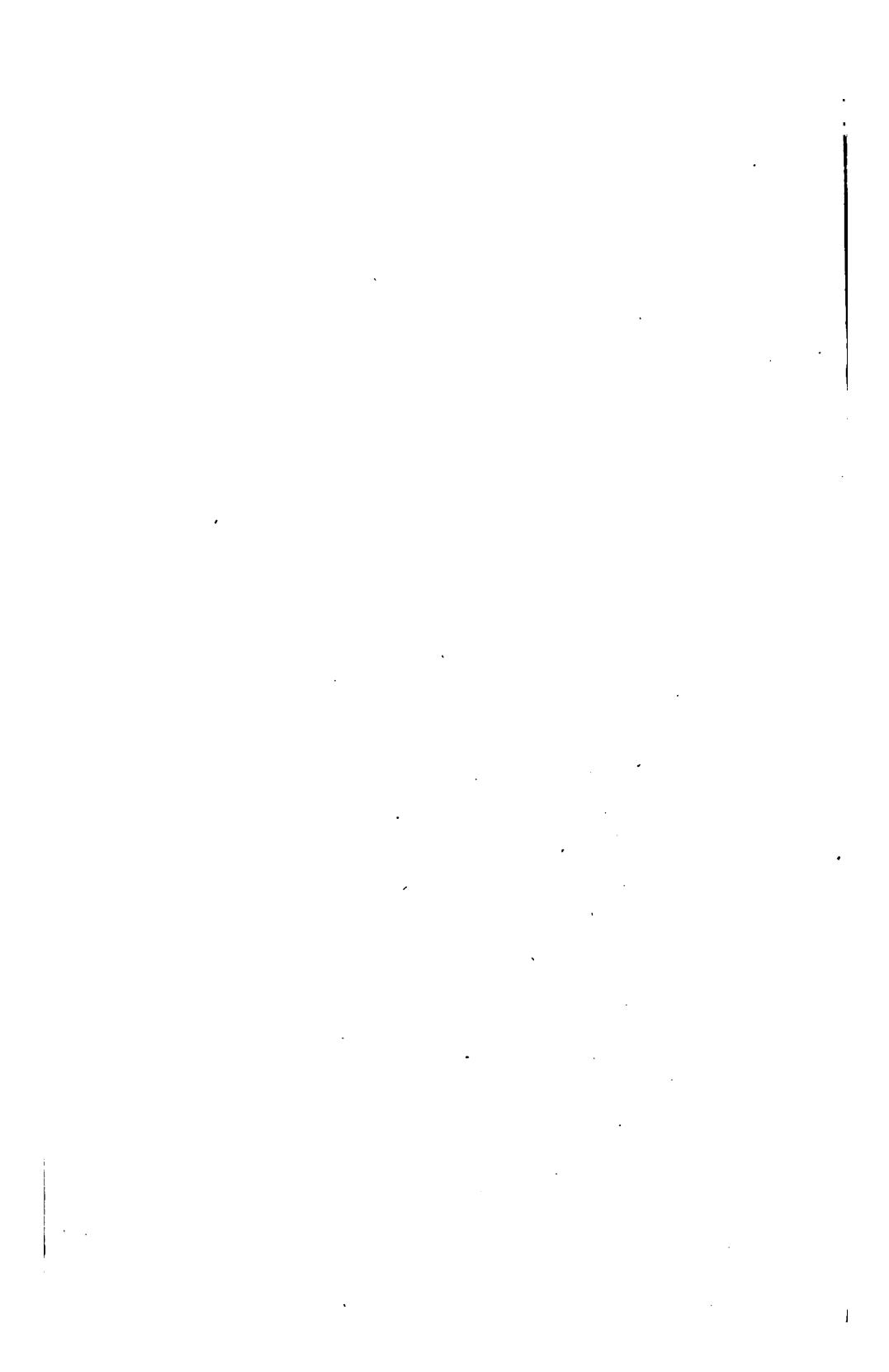








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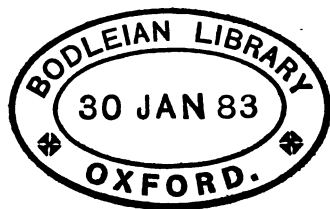
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WITH AN

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VI.

*BISHOP BURNET AND CONTEMPORARY
SCHEMES OF CHURCH COMPREHENSION.*

BY

S. PEARSON, M.A.

Contents of Lecture 6.

BURNET BORN 1643; DIED 1715.

Period—1685—1714.

BURNET born, 1643. Preacher in London, 1674; in Holland, &c., 1685-1688—The Age designated—Accession of James (1685)—The Mass restored—Royal Indulgence proclaimed (1687)—A second in 1688—Trial and acquittal of seven bishops (1688, *June 30th*)—Attitude of the Nonconformists.

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VI.

BISHOP BURNET AND CONTEMPORARY SCHEMES OF CHURCH COMPREHENSION.

GILBERT BURNET was born September 18, 1648, at Edinburgh. He was cradled amid the convulsions of civil war. The stern spirit of the Covenanters was about him in childhood. Puritanism was putting forth its mightiest force against tyrannical power; and the events of the Commonwealth period must have taught him even in youth that England would never bow the neck to a despotism again. The great struggle of our history took place during that period; the people learned their own strength; and the question of religious liberty was then virtually fought out to its bitter end.

What was to follow when the smoke of battle had cleared away could not appear very clearly to a close observer of the times. Burnet and others had to feel their way toward a settlement and solution of questions of civil and ecclesiastical government. One thing became clear, viz., that Englishmen must learn to live together, even though their modes of thought differed as widely as the poles asunder. It was left to Burnet's master, William III., to solve the civic difficulty, while Burnet did much to smooth away the hindrances to a peaceable ecclesiastical settlement.

For this work Burnet passed through an exceptional course of education and experience. Born in Edinburgh,

and graduating at Aberdeen, he obtained an insight into the resoluteness with which Christian truth was held in those northern borders. Brought early into contact with Sir Robert Murray, who in 1668 was appointed to represent the Government, he soon saw the intricacies of the executive civil power. Refusing one of the Scottish bishoprics on the plea of youth, he yet occupied positions of great influence; first, in 1668 as minister of the parish of Saltoun in East Lothian, in 1669 as Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, in 1674 as Preacher at the Rolls Chapel and Lecturer at St. Clement's in London. Compelled by his conscience and a regard to his personal safety to leave the kingdom when James II. came to the throne, he had ample opportunities of enlarging his mind by travel on the continent. And finding a refuge at the Hague, he continued for some time in close personal communication with the Prince of Orange and his wife. All these circumstances not only made him an important actor in the times of which he has given us such a picturesque though prolix account in his history, but they tended to mould the man and to fit him for the part which he had to play in the difficult and delicate circumstances of his day.

The character of Burnet gleams from the pages of his *History of His Own Time*. It is not difficult to catch glimpses of his genial temper, of his loquaciousness, of his good churchmanship, of his love of affairs, of his bustling self-importance, of his large-hearted charity, and above all of his untiring industry. The *History of His Own Time* stretches through many hundreds of pages; his *History of the Reformation* is a voluminous and candid work; his *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, tainted, as his High Church contemporaries said, with latitudinarianism, shows diligence and a knowledge of the lines which separated the contending theological systems from one another; and

his book on Pastoral Care, and his account of the death of the Earl of Rochester reveal the elements of a genuine and earnest piety at the core of his being. Other books, sermons, and speeches will be mentioned if necessary, but it is only needful to refer to them here as illustrating his great industry and his untiring zeal for the truth.*

We cannot claim for him the possession of any original force. He was not the master of any great situation, but in several instances he was its useful servant. He was not one to create a set of spiritual or ecclesiastical forces whose influence remains unspent for generations. He was rather the child of his own age, the embodiment of some tendencies which were then emerging into importance. And the chief value of his life and work is that through them we can best study the grave questions which had to be settled in some fashion during that age.

The age from 1685-1714 may be variously designated according to our standpoint. It succeeded heroic times, and is therefore, by contrast, of a dull and sombre colour ;

* For a clever but unfaithful and unfriendly portraiture of Burnet, see Dryden, *The Hind and the Panther*, 2435 :

“ A portly prince and goodly to the sight,
He seem'd a son of Anak for his height :
Like those whom stature did to crowns prefer :
Black-brow'd, and bluff, like Homer's Jupiter :
Broad-back'd and brawny-built for love's delight ;
A prophet form'd to make a female proselyte.
A thologue more by need than genial bent,
By breeding sharp, by nature confident.
Interest in all his actions was discern'd ;
More learn'd than honest, more a wit than learn'd :
Or forced by fear, or by his profit led,
Or both conjoin'd, his native elime he fled :
But brought the virtue of his heaven along :
A fair behaviour, and a fluent tongue.
And yet with all his arts he could not thrive ;
The most unlucky parasite alive.”

but, closely regarded, it is seen to be of vast import in the settlement of our liberties on a broad and deep basis. If we begin with James II. and think of his declarations of indulgence, and of the stern opposition with which he was met, we shall call it the conflict between *Crown and People*, the last stern fight of the Stuart period. If we think of Baxter's dying aspirations, of the sweetness and suavity of Tillotson, and of the concord between Nonconformists and Churchmen brought about by the trial of the seven bishops, we may designate it as the Age of *Conciliation*. If we have regard to the masculine and immovable purpose of the English people not to bend the neck to Rome, and call to mind the sieges of Londonderry and Limerick, and the battle of the Boyne, we may denominate it as the Age of *Political Protestantism*. If, on the other hand, we study the cautious and charitable policy of William III. we see ourselves fairly launched on the Age of *Toleration*. Or, if we examine the projects of Halifax, Nottingham, Tillotson, Burnet, and others, we may regard it as the age of attempted but abortive *Comprehension*. And if, finally, we listen to the fierce outbursts of inflated rhetoric which came from Dr. Henry Sacheverell in the reign of Queen Anne, or read the caustic satire of De Foe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, we shall feel that the lurid flames in which meeting-houses and Romish chapels were burned, light up the period of pseudo-Protestant *bigotry and persecution*. In any case it was a strange, confused period of commingled and conflicting elements, with one or two great purposes striving in English life for the mastery. Though the old antagonisms were less marked than before, they nevertheless existed in a pronounced form. The antitheses can easily be discerned and designated: Puritanism and Sacerdotalism; Kingcraft and Democracy; Calvinism and Arminianism; Presbyterianism and Epis-

copalianism; Conformity and Nonconformity; Churchmanship and Erastianism; Protestantism and Romanism. Out of these seething elements the great eternal and ever-recurring questions had to be settled as to what is Christianity and what the Church of Christ.

It will be necessary to trace the history of the period in as far as it has a bearing on the ecclesiastical principles in which we are more especially interested.

King James, who came to the throne in 1685, would gladly have carried out the worst parts of the Stuart policy to their bitter end, but he was unable. He had all the obstinacy of his race, but he did not inspire the same chivalrous sentiments in his subjects as did Charles I., nor did he attract by a winsome, careless manner as did Charles II. He was an austere, authoritative, blundering bigot. And, fortunately for our country, he came to his crown after England had passed through a bitter and never to be forgotten experience. She had tasted the sweets of liberty, she had bought freedom from monarchical despotism with some of her best blood; and she was not now to be defrauded of her rights by the high-handed actions of a Catholic king. Arrayed against him were the two most forcible ingredients of the English character—first, the love of country, and secondly, the love of Protestant truth. In those times Romanism was a foe to be dreaded and shunned with mortal hatred. It meant the subjugation of England's name and government to a foreign and external power; and the very thought of such a catastrophe made an Englishman's blood boil in his veins. It meant also the subjection of man's soul, with all its secret mysteries of sorrow, sin, and hope, to the dictates of a human priesthood; and against this Protestant Englishmen have always been ready to fight to the death. How could James expect to conquer when he had such foes to deal with? Not so strong were the tides of

the Atlantic that rolled against the Cornish coasts as these civic and moral forces with which, in heedless rage or with constant unfaithfulness to his high trust, James attempted to deal.

These forces external to the king are sufficient to account for the striking changes which took place in his policy, especially toward the Protestant Nonconformists. The judge after his own heart was Jeffreys, the monster of injustice. Before this judge there was brought one of the noblest and most charitable spirits of any age—the revered Richard Baxter. His grey hairs, and frame worn out with many pains, ought to have commanded respect. But the word had gone forth that there was to be no change of the relentless policy of the Stuarts. The punishment of Baxter, viz., fine and imprisonment, was lenient when contrasted with the indignity which was heaped upon him by the coarse-mouthed Jeffreys. He was haled to prison for some objectionable phrases in his commentary on the New Testament. And every man of the same seraphic zeal, and the same Puritanic principle, would have been dealt with after a similar ruthless fashion if James had not been somewhat more earnest than his brother Charles in holding to the Catholic religion. For no sooner did he come to the throne than mass, which had been hitherto celebrated privately in the queen's room, was celebrated with open doors before the court, much to the confusion of the courtiers. Some knelt when they saw the elevation of the host, and others fled. This kindness to the Catholic religion could not be carried on unless the laws against Nonconformity were relaxed. Those laws were, as we know, as severe as any laws could well be short of those directed to exterminate the hated sects. Claverhouse was illustrating the brutal and bloody spirit of persecution which was embodied in the king at the very time that that king was protecting his own form of religion by breaking

the law. If Romanism was to be protected, it became evident that the king would have to surround himself by a new atmosphere of sympathy. He hated the Puritan Nonconformists with a deadly hatred, but he loved Romanism more. Manifestations of both these feelings at one and the same time in overt acts were clearly impossible. One set of feelings must be repressed in order that the other might have free play. It was merely a game of selfishness. Everything was ignoble about the policy. And yet for a time it led to a desirable relaxation of the stringency of the law. Puritan Nonconformists were let alone so that Romanists might remain unpersecuted. The king issued an indulgence to tender consciences on April 4, 1687.

This declaration went in the teeth of the law. It enabled Romanists to walk through the streets with processions, and abolished all religious tests. Fifteen years before, Charles II. had issued a similar, though milder, declaration, but had been compelled to withdraw it at the request of the Houses of Parliament. The issue raised was as to who should be supreme, king or Parliament? But there were circumstances which prevented this issue from immediately coming to a point. Those circumstances are to be found in the history and attitude of the Protestant Nonconformists. The laws which repressed the Catholic included the Puritan Nonconformist in their scope; and the relaxation which released the one gave liberty also to the other. For twenty-seven years the policy of persecution had swayed the councils of the nation, and men like Bunyan, Baxter, and others cast in a similar noble mould, had been treated as the vilest felons. They had been condemned and imprisoned unrighteously, and if now they were released unconstitutionally, it was not for them to raise legal objections. Freedom was their birthright as Englishmen, and when it came

they did not examine too curiously the hand that unlocked their doors. Nice constitutional questions are apt to be overlooked or brushed aside when men are panting for the free air of heaven. And in this case the Nonconformists took advantage of the lenity with which the laws were administered from the commencement of the reign of James I., and also of the Declaration of Indulgence of 1687.

They were, however, keen enough to see that a great and vital point was at issue; and when the subsequent declaration of 1688 was promulgated they boldly opposed the king. Their motives were twofold; first, they detested the encroachments of the Crown on popular rights; and, secondly, they abhorred the Romish religion. Probably the first would not have carried them through the crisis; the second was doubtless stronger than the first; but both combined sent them irresistibly to the side of the seven bishops.

It was on the 27th of April, 1688, that the king sent forth his second Declaration of Indulgence, which differed in nothing essential from the first. And it was in the week following, on May 4th, that he made known his fatal resolution that it should be read in the churches. At this juncture, Macaulay tells us that "the Protestant Dissenters of London earned for themselves a title to the gratitude of their country."* And it must be acknowledged that the old sturdy Puritan spirit was never more sorely tried. This time the trial came not through the fear of imprisonment or death, but through the subtle temptation to accept ease and relief at the expense of the liberties of England. Baxter, Bates, and Howe were conspicuous still in this new crisis, and true to justice and right as they had ever been. But it must be conceded that their light was not the perfect one of a frank conces-

* Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. ii. chap. viii. p. 89.

sion of equal rights all round. Their self-renunciation was indeed bright with the purest rays of moral heroism. But their judgment was, in some measure, led astray by their quick and resentful passion against their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects. A calm and dispassionate analysis of their principles on this ever-memorable occasion shows them to have been actuated, indeed, by the purest motives, but also to have been urged forward by an intense desire to deny to Romanism a footing among the recognized authorities in the State. The true test of the absolute disinterestedness and justice of their position would have been a refusal of indulgence for themselves alone, had such an indulgence been put forth by royal authority. As it was, they were necessarily included among the Catholics, and this fellowship was eminently distasteful to them.

But whatever the moral value of their attitude, it was taken at a time when the liberties of our country were in extremest peril. And even though we may pause to discriminate and weigh their action, we cannot withhold from it the meed of our admiration and moral delight. Successors of men who had pined in prison, who had been turned from manse and church by the Act of Uniformity; nay, many of them the self-same men who had suffered these grievous penalties; we find in them the same old Puritanic spirit, God-fearing, unflinching, unfearing, and ready for any martyrdom rather than submit to degradation and shame.

It was this spirit that was transfused into the veins of the Established Church, and made its bishops what they have seldom or ever been since in English history—the wonder and admiration of the whole Protestant world. The ardour of martyrdom, which had seemed to die out of episcopal hearts when Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and Hooper perished in Oxford flames, revived again. Not

only England, but the whole of Christendom paused to look at this intensifying struggle. A meeting of London clergy was held; Tillotson, whose silvery eloquence had charmed the multitudes, Sherlock, Patrick, Stillingfleet, and Edward Fowler were there. It was the triumph of a minority in the right against a majority in favour of concession. A sturdy few stood out against reading the declaration, affirming that such an action on their part would be contrary to their consciences; and the whole meeting agreed to draw up a resolution by which they bound themselves to disobey the king. Eighty-five incumbents soon signed the paper; and the rupture between Church and State commenced to widen, and men began to wonder "whereunto this would grow."

On the 18th of May a meeting of bishops and other officers of the Church was held at Lambeth Palace, to determine on the course of action which they should pursue. On the following Sunday they must obey or disobey; and this was Friday. They resolved to petition the king that very night, and by the following morning their petition was circulating in all the coffee-houses of the city. They had taken their stand; and what James called rebellion would doubtless be regarded by the nation as loyalty on their part to the cause of liberty. The national feeling soon made itself felt. On the fatal Sunday there were few churches where the order of the king was obeyed; and in some cases where the clergyman attempted to read the declaration the congregation rose and left the church. It is reckoned that by the middle of July ten thousand clergymen had disobeyed the king's orders. James was in a sorry plight. To go back was degradation; to go forward was certain ruin.

Archbishop Sancroft and six others were summoned on the 8th of June to appear before the king. In that interview they were subjected to a cross-examination entirely

illegal; and then commanded to enter into their recognisances to appear in the Court of King's Bench. On their refusal they were taken down the river to the Tower. The popular feeling as they passed to their prison was unmistakable. The crowds knelt and besought their blessing, some dashing into the stream to get near them; and the soldiers, whose numbers had been redoubled, were as enthusiastic in their cause as the multitude against whose outbreak they were set to watch.

The trial of the seven bishops, which has been depicted with consummate skill by Macaulay, began on 29th June; and on the following day the jury returned a verdict of acquittal. The pent-up feelings of the people knew no bounds. All London was in a roar of delight: horsemen flew apace and scattered the news to eager multitudes in every town and village throughout the kingdom; and the soldiers, whom the king had been reviewing at Hounslow that morning, burst into a loud shout as soon as his back was turned. It was a great deliverance, and England will never forget the firm and intrepid stand which was taken by Sancroft and his brethren.

But though the attitude of the Nonconformists was not so conspicuous in this great crisis as that of the Conformists, it was marked by equal strength of purpose, and also and necessarily by a more conspicuous disinterestedness. Many efforts were made to stir them up to express thanks to James for his indulgence. Stephen Lobb was employed to work upon the feelings of the Independents; and William Penn is said to have endeavoured to manipulate the Quakers. But in neither case was the agent successful; for there were only sixty addresses from the whole country in six months, and these contained but few signatures.*

* Macaulay, vol. ii. p. 31. See *London Gazette*.

When the bishops were lodged in the town, ten Non-conformists waited upon them to express admiration and sympathy. This was a bitter drop in the king's cup. The very men for whose sake, together with the Catholics, he was bartering the liberties of England, spurned his gifts with contempt. They declined to accept a freedom which came to them in the garb of personal despotism. The king had tried to buy their favour and to corrupt their fidelity. But they had been at a hard school where the lessons of liberty once learned are not easily forgotten. After the trial of the seven bishops was over, Archbishop Sancroft wrote a letter of extraordinary effusiveness, in which he commended the Dissenters to the love and esteem of the clergy and members of the Established Church. It seemed as though all breaches had been suddenly healed. A common danger had made them forget their differences for awhile ; and both Conformists and Nonconformists felt that they belonged to one Church and one nation. But those differences touched vital points as to the nature of God's kingdom ; and they could not for any great length of time be concealed. A period of war is not the fit opportunity for settling the sublime questions of theology and ecclesiastical polity, and such a time had now been entered upon. The nation was at war with its king. The swollen tides of English indignation swept the vacillating king from the throne ; and amid the tumult and confusion it was impossible to look at religion in the light of first principles. James hurried on toward his own destruction. He flouted the ancient universities, he endeavoured to force a Benedictine monk, Alban Francis, as a graduate on the University of Cambridge, contrary to the clearest statutes ; and at length his blundering folly and high-handed despotism landed him an exile in the ceremonious and fulsome court of Louis XIV.

Meanwhile, as it is no part of our task to trace the

general history of this period, we shall follow for a while the steps of Gilbert Burnet again. While these revolutionary elements had been evolving, Burnet was on the continent. A glance at his past life, as it is indicated in his own history, will show that he could not have been an uninterested or uninstructed spectator of public events. Brought up among the religionists of the north, and at one time a minister of the Scotch Episcopal Church,* he is able to give a very graphic account of the methods and habits of the Presbyterians. He says of them, "They were men all of a sort; they affected great sublimities in devotion; they poured themselves out in their prayers with a loud voice, and often with many tears."† He was, however, already a man of moderation, and seems a little later, when Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, to have been exposed on this account to the censures both of the Episcopal and Presbyterian parties.‡ In gathering materials for his *Memoirs of the Dukes of Hamilton*, he was drawn to London, introduced to the Earl of Lauderdale, and on a subsequent visit, in 1678, made a king's chaplain. In this year he resigned his professorship at Glasgow and settled in London; and, as we have already stated, was appointed preacher and lecturer. But as he was known to be opposed to the court party, he was compelled to resign these appointments; and upon the accession of James he obtained permission to leave the kingdom, and went to Paris. He then made a tour through France, Italy, and Switzerland, and was about to settle at Utrecht when he was sent for, to the Hague, by the Prince and Princess of Orange.

* He was ordained by the Bishop of Edinburgh in 1665. Life prefixed to *Discourse on Pastoral Care*, p. x.

† Burnet's *History of His Own Time*, p. 21.

‡ Life of Burnet prefixed to *Discourse on Pastoral Care*, p. xii.

England has hardly yet realized the debt of gratitude which we owe to Holland. That country had fought with a lion's courage the myrmidons of Spain in the time of Philip II; and having secured herself from the encroachments of tyranny, she became a refuge for some of the noblest sons whom our soil has produced. There the Puritan Free Churchmen of Serooby found a halting-place before they went forth to create a new realm of liberty. And though she was destined to be torn asunder by Arminian and Calvinistic faction, and to be the scene of a Protestant and political bigotry which would incarcerate Grotius, execute Barneveld, and impose the decrees of the Synod of Dort on the minds of a free people, yet she remained for many generations the bold pioneer of progress, and gave testimony by her expenditure of gold and blood to her undying loyalty to the cause of freedom.

Breathing that air, John Locke (1682-1704) thought out his noble plea for Toleration, which was published in one of the great and eventful years of our history—1688.* When it was translated into English in 1689 by William Popple, a Unitarian minister, the translator introduced it with these words, "It is neither declarations of indulgence nor acts of comprehension, such as have as yet been practised or projected amongst us, that can do the work. Absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty, is the thing that we stand in need of." These were brave words, and if they expressed the spirit of Locke's thoughts, as we believe they did, we may be sure that that spirit would lay hold of and impress Burnet. He probably had no communication with Locke, who was

* This Letter on Toleration first appeared in the *Bibliothèque* of 1688, addressed to Leinborch; and it was published in Latin at Gouda in the following year (*English Cyclopædia*—Locke). It was speedily translated into English, Dutch, and French. See Fowler's *Locke (Men of Letters)*, p. 50.

for the most part at Amsterdam, while he was at the Hague; but the letters of Locke were a part of the spirit of the age in which he lived. He was not so consistent and logical as Locke, but he was wishful to see various forms of Protestantism tolerated as far as that was possible in a country which boasted an Established Church. The thinker was free to think and write his lucid reasoning; but Burnet when he returned would be an officer of the Church established by law; and it was not easy, therefore, for him to take the same direct and simple view of things.

But while the philosopher was writing, and the ecclesiastic was scheming, the statesman had to regard the Church question from his own peculiar standpoint. And living at the Hague there was a man whose broad and sagacious, though Erastian, mind was taking in all the practical and political bearings of the complicated subject. He saw with disgust and dismay, and yet with calm foresight, the mistakes by which James was ruining himself; and William Prince of Orange determined to save the English crown and the cause of Protestantism by one tremendous blow. That he was unwilling to go to extremities is shown by his conduct in reference to Burnet. When James complained of Burnet's presence at the court of the Hague, William compelled himself to forego the profit of his attendance and of his advice. But as the great crisis of 1688 approached, and a rupture became inevitable, Burnet was again called to the side of the prince. The famous and momentous declaration to the English people issued by William, which had been drawn up by Fagel, was abridged by Burnet.* He sailed with the prince from Holland, and watched the shifting winds with an anxious eye. He saw the fleet rounding the promontory at Torbay, and carried at first too far by the breeze; and he

* Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 143.

saw also the breeze suddenly change so that they were brought to the exact spot for which they had been making. He was one of the first to greet William as they landed together at Torbay on November 5, 1688, and it was he who asked the playful and untimely question as to what William thought now of the doctrine of election. A few days after, he read William's declaration, and preached in the cathedral of Exeter. And soon after the accession of William he was instituted to the See of Salisbury.

Thus if we look back, we see that the scene has considerably shifted. James has made his second and his successful ignominious flight, dropping the great seal into the bed of the Thames as he goes. William, surrounded with his Dutch guards, is safely ensconced at Whitehall. Londonderry has yet to win its immortal fame; the men of Limerick to prove that undaunted courage is the quality of no special creed; and the battle of the Boyne to settle the destinies of Ireland; while Glencoe is to leave traces of bloody deeds deeply staining the page of Scotland's history. But meanwhile the great fact is established that William is king, and that Protestantism is in the ascendant.

We know what Romanism in the ascendant means. How far it has changed since Queen Mary's day it would be difficult to say. It has necessarily been impressed by the spirit of progress even in spite of itself. But its syllabus breathing forth a fierce spirit of persecution, shows that its theoretical claims are as arrogant as ever they were; and it still demands to have rule, by an organized hierarchy, over man's domestic, social, political, ecclesiastical, and spiritual life. Such claims have been made over and over again on England; but they have been resisted by the stubborn heroism of an enlightened Christianity, by the simple and yet awful faith of those who believed themselves priests of God's own making, and the very children

of the most High, and by the blood and sufferings of innumerable martyrs. And should those imperious pretensions be made in the future, this nation will, we believe, still possess enough Protestantism to resist one of the most treacherous tyrannies to which the human soul could be subjected, and the direst calamity that could overtake our country.

But in resisting Catholic ascendancy there is always a danger of allowing human passions to swing to the other extreme. Instead of one kind of despotism we may have another. Instead of Catholic ascendancy we may have Protestant ascendancy. And when William came to the throne, it needed a strong effort to prevent a Protestant reaction from inflicting the curse of persecution once more on the nation. To begin with, public opinion was not yet sufficiently informed on the principles at stake. Even John Locke provided in his liberal scheme for the exclusion of atheists and papists from the rights of citizenship.* Next of all, the pressing question of the hour was the settlement of the Crown. And it was felt necessary to surround it with Protestant safeguards. The nation had to take guarantees from its monarch that he would not use his lofty position to tamper with the prevailing religion of the nation. It should be noted that this can be done quite apart from the existence of an Established Church. Whether the chief officer of a nation should be compelled to submit to a religious test is a question which can now be more calmly looked at than when the nation was smarting from the high-handed policy of James. When the Crown is surrounded as it is at the present day with all

* See J. J. Taylor's *Retrospect of the Religious Life of England*, p. 238. Also John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, vol. ii. p. 281. John Locke's *Letter on Toleration*, No. I., p. 31. (Ward, Lock, and Tyler.)

necessary constitutional checks, it seems as unnecessary as it is unfair to demand from its wearer any particular religious profession. But in those days the prerogatives of the Crown had not yet been finally defined and restricted; and Protestantism seemed to demand for its very life that the monarch should not be a Papist.

That which applied to the sovereign seemed logically to apply to all those who were entrusted with positions of authority. If the one who executed the laws must be a Protestant, it seemed right also that those who made the laws should be of the same colour. A vicious principle was evidently somewhere at work, and the application of it could not but be fatal to all notions of equality before the law. The Protestant succession was resolved upon on the 29th of January, 1689, and is vindicated by Macaulay on the ground that our sovereign is not merely a civic functionary, but that he occupies the headship of the English Church. It is unnecessary to point out that the existence of the organized relation between Church and State is the point in dispute between Conformists and Nonconformists; and till that is settled, the questions collateral to it will hardly receive a just and candid solution.

This organized relation made a settlement of the Protestant succession necessary as soon as William and Mary came to the throne; and it made other discussions and settlements also imperative. The theory up to this time which successive governments had endeavoured to carry out was that State and Church were conterminous, and that just as it was the duty of the citizen to pay his taxes, so it was his duty to go to his parish church and there to listen to what had been provided by a paternal authority for his instruction. This theory would not however fit into actual facts. For reasons into which we need not enter, men had in large numbers declined to go to the

parish church, or to avail themselves of the ministrations of the government official. And these recusants did not belong to the vicious and unruly orders of society. On the contrary, they were amongst the most sober, the most discreet, and the most law-abiding of the subjects of the realm. What was to be done with them? Fines and imprisonments, ear-cutting and nose-slitting, the pillory and torture, fire and steel, had all been tried in vain. By a struggle full of heroism and of the most pathetic patience they had won for themselves a right to live.

Two courses now opened before the statesmen of William III. They might tolerate dissensions from the national Church, or they might comprehend all sections within its ample folds. It is my business to show how the first was done, and how and why the second was left undone.

The story of toleration is a comparatively simple one. That of comprehension is more complicated.

The debt due to the Dissenters for their disinterestedness in 1687 had to be paid in 1689; and accordingly a Bill was introduced in the House of Lords, entitled *An Act for exempting their Majesties' Protestant Subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalties of Certain Laws*. The House of Commons also had a Bill of their own, but after it had been read with the Lord's Bill on May 11, 1689, it was agreed to waive their own and to proceed only with the latter. It did not provoke much discussion in the House. During its passage John Howe made an appeal for a wider toleration than that which was proposed. The Bill however passed on May 17th, and as it is the Act under which Dissent has been permitted to grow to its present proportions, it will be well to describe its provisions.

It does not explicitly and fully repeal the previous persecuting Acts, of which Nonconformists had felt the

pressure. It was still a crime for a man to absent himself from his parish church, unless he could prove that he attended a conventicle. It was enacted in the reign of Queen Elizabeth that every absentee should pay a fine of twelve pence.*

What the Act accomplished was to take off these restrictions from Protestant Dissenters of a certain order. Papists were excluded from its provisions, so also were Unitarians. Persons were allowed to meet for worship with unlocked doors; tithes were still to be paid by all; persons chosen to certain parish offices might, if they scrupled to take the oaths, appoint deputies; Dissenting ministers might preach on subscribing to thirty-six out of the Thirty-nine Articles, and Baptist ministers were exempted from subscribing to the Twenty-seventh Article. This declaration of assent to the Articles was to be registered at a charge of sixpence, and the declarants were then free to exercise their ministry. To meet the case of Quakers, a declaration could be substituted for the usual oath. Disturbers of public worship were to be punished, and places of public worship were to be certified.

This in brief was the famous Act of Toleration. Looking back from our larger place of liberty, we cannot but wonder at the meagre concessions which were granted; but regarding it in the light of the long and terrific struggle which had been going on from the days of Elizabeth onward, it is seen to be an Act fraught with momentous consequences. It was in fact the victory of liberty over spiritual despotism; and though the terms were hard, yet the State had henceforth to confess itself defeated by the stern and sorrowful struggle which the Nonconformists had maintained for more than a hundred

* An Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer. 29 Elizabeth, cap. 2, f. 14.

years. Henceforth they had the right to live ; and under the ægis of this Act they began to build meeting-houses, and to form academies, where much religious light and zeal were stored for the illumination and salvation of the nation.

Baxter's dying words * were uttered under the protection afforded by this new state of things. The Quakers were still sorely vexed about some of the oaths, and continued a noble testimony against the payment of tithes ; but Barclay, who died in 1690, and George Fox, who departed the year following, must have both felt that a blessed change had come over the spirit of legislation. They were at least allowed to breathe their last aspirations in a freer place than a prison. "Do not heed," said Fox, a few hours before his death ; "the power of the Lord is above all sickness and death ; the Seed, *i.e.*, the Divine Saviour, reigns, blessed be the Lord." Burnet thought that Dissent could not last long, and he predicted that it would not survive the decease of Baxter, Bates, and Howe. But it was intimated to him that Nonconformity had more to do with principles than with persons.† And so it proved. The old Puritans were passing away. They made the best of their few years of liberty. Oliver Heywood ordained preachers to take up the work which his incessant zeal had begun ; Theophilus Gale had his academy for the training of Dissenting preachers at Newington Green ; and Thomas Doolittle had one at Islington, to which young Matthew Henry was sent, and from which he wrote to say, "I perceive that Mr. Doolittle is very studious and diligent, and that Mrs. Doolittle and her daughter are very fine and gallant."‡ Instead of the fathers were

* Baxter died Dec. 9, 1691.

† Stoughton's *Ecclesiastical History*. "The Church of the Revolution," p. 404.

‡ Ibid. p. 416.

coming the children. Philip Henry was passing away and his greater son Matthew was to take his place. Edmund Calamy was of a milder type than his grandfather of the same name ; but he did a work suited to the new generation. Samuel Annesley could almost afford to leave the world, for he left twenty-four children behind him. Dr. Manton, Nathaniel Vincent, of Southwark, Dr. William Bates, * of Mare Street, Hackney, John Howe, † of Silver Street ; and among the Baptists, Kiffin, ‡ Keach and the immortal John Bunyan belong rather to the previous generation.

But whether they laboured under the Stuarts or under the Revolution, they one and all bought for us the beginnings of that liberty which to-day is the very breath of our nostrils. We may despise or condemn the thought of toleration in the light of what our hopes lead us still to expect ; but when it first came to England it was like the dawning of a long-delayed sun. It meant that the night of repression, of legalized murder, and of war to the death, was now over. Whatever stings of persecution might be left behind, the battle of freedom had been fought, and had now been won. There have been retrogressions on a small scale since then, outburst of blind fury and fanatical bigotry ; but the tide has steadily risen in favour of freedom from that hour to the present. The Act of Toleration was the turning-point in favour of Nonconformists, and was in fact the salvation of the State.

There were some who felt how miserably defective this Act was in the light of the pure principles of justice, to say nothing of the higher principles of Christian love. Bishop Burnet was amongst these. Elevated to the See of Salisbury soon after William and Mary came to the

* Bates died July, 1699.

† Died April 2, 1705.

‡ Died 1701.

throne, he yearned to bind all Protestant Christians into one wide and ample community. He loved the English Church too well to see it weakened by Dissent; and he loved Christian charity too deeply to see without inward fret unnecessary divisions perpetuated.

If there had been men like him on the Episcopal Bench at the Restoration, the rupture of 1662 would have been less serious, or it might have been avoided. The Savoy Conference of that year was futile because, much as Baxter and others might argue, the episcopal party had made up its mind to grant no concession. Another and in some respects a better time had arrived in 1689. There was now more readiness to concede points in dispute. The Anglican Church could afford to be just, and was called upon, by the memory of what Nonconformists had done to save the State, to be generous. But underneath these fair promises of success there were symptoms of a very different mental and spiritual condition, which made the task from the beginning a hopeless one.

The Presbyterians of Baxter's type had always been anxious for a reconciliation with the State Church. And in principle they remained just where they had been. But it became a practical question with their preachers at least, as to whether the change into an Establishment would be worth the necessary pains. Macaulay accounts for their unwillingness on the ground of their comfortable circumstances. They had well-to-do congregations, some of them had rich wives, they were well cared for by their flocks, and it became doubtful whether these flocks would follow them back to the pastures of the Anglican Church. This is, we submit, a superficial view to take even of the Presbyterians. And it certainly does not account for the attitude of the Independents, and more especially of the Baptists and Quakers. It is difficult to meet with these rich pasture lands outside the city of London as we look

over the country at large. A glance at Calamy's *Memorial of the Two Thousand Ejected Ministers* will show that these men were for the most part destined to a life of comparative poverty; and that it would be easy to find among them a very large number who were "passing rich on forty pounds a year."

A more accurate account of their position would, we believe, lead us to conclude that they had tasted the sweets of liberty too long to pine for any further shackles, however gilded those shackles might be. They found by actual experience that they could do God's work without the aid of the State, without the sanction of tradition, and without the blessing of an episcopal ordination. And we need look no further for an explanation of their apparent apathy in 1689.

With the left wing of the Puritan army it was different. No scheme of comprehension could have brought in the conscientious Quaker or the sturdy Baptist. The Independents are said to have been more open to compromise; but there is no authentic evidence that they would have forsaken their distinctive principles in order to enlarge by their accession the boundaries of the national Church.

Before we treat more fully on the causes of the failure of this effort, we shall briefly describe the nature of the effort itself.*

The first earnest effort towards a comprehensive State Church was made in the Westminster Assembly of divines, which met in 1643. Skeats tells us that "the Independents prayed to be included in the proposed new national Church, the conditions being that the power of

* For a full survey of this subject, see Macaulay's *History of England*; Burnet's *History of His Own Time*; Neal's *History of the Puritans*; John Hunt's *History of Religious Thought*; Stoughton's *History of the Church of the Revolution*; Skeats's *History of the Free Churches*.

ordination should be reserved to their own congregations, and that they might be subject in Church censures to Parliament, but not to any Presbytery" (p. 52). To these proposals the Presbyterians were unwilling to agree; and the Independents, falling back on the great principle of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, refused assent to a Presbyterian State Church, and a coercive establishment of religion. Individual Independents, like Cromwell, Milton, St. John, and Vane, came to wield tremendous and perilous power; but the country was saved by the noble action of the Independents in the Westminster Assembly from being blighted, at least for twenty golden years, by an overshadowing and intolerant Establishment.

In 1648 King Charles I. sent for Archbishop Usher to the Isle of Wight, and here a scheme which had been drawn up by the Archbishop seven years before, and rejected by the king, was again submitted to his majesty. Charles proposed this scheme to the Parliamentary Commissioners, but it was by them rejected. This plan is succinctly defined by Green in his *History of the English People* (vol. iii. p. 354), as one in which "the bishop was only the president of a diocesan board of presbyters." Hallam describes it at greater length when he says (*History of England*, vol. ii. p. 319) that it "consisted first in the appointment of a suffragan bishop for each rural deanery holding a monthly synod of the presbyters within his district; and secondly, in an annual diocesan synod of suffragans and representatives of the presbyters under the presidency of the bishop, and deciding upon all matters before them by plurality of suffrages." This scheme of Usher's was proposed by the Presbyterians to Charles II. just previous to his restoration, not because they thoroughly approved it, but because they thought it the best settlement of differences which they were likely to obtain. The failure of Charles II. to fulfil any of the

delusive promises which he held out to the Presbyterians was as signal a piece of falsehood as is to be found in the records of the Stuart family.

The next effort made towards a reconciliation took place in 1661 at the Savoy Conference, at which Baxter, Calamy, Manton, and Reynolds were conspicuous on the Presbyterian side ; and Morley, Cosins, Gauden, Pearson, and Gunning were conspicuous on the Episcopal side. The Presbyterians objected to the sign of the cross in baptism, to the wearing of a surplice, to kneeling at the Lord's Supper, to the doctrines of baptismal regeneration and priestly absolution, and to several other things of a kindred nature.* There was little sign of yielding on the part of the Episcopalians ; and this conference proved a failure. The Presbyterians were left outside the Establishment.

In 1668 a further effort was made to heal these divisions by a few men who felt keenly the critical state in which the country had been brought by various disasters. Lord Keeper Bridgman, Lord Chief Justice Hales, Bishop Wilkins, Reynolds, Dr. Burton, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, and others, set on foot a project, and drew up certain proposals which were submitted to Dr. Bates, Manton, and Baxter. These proposals contained some sweeping changes in the Book of Common Prayer ; and would evidently have been accepted by the Presbyterian party. At the same time suggested heads of toleration were communicated by Dr. Owen to the Independents. But when these measures became known the court party stirred up such a spirit of opposition that they not only utterly failed, but also led to a new outburst of persecution.†

On the Duke of York's marriage in 1673 with the

* Neal's *History of the Puritans*, vol. iv. pp. 330, 331.

† Ibid. p. 418.

Princess of Modena, an Italian Papist, the Protestant feelings of the country were again stirred, and a fresh effort was made after union. Baxter, at the request of the Earl of Orrery, drew up some proposals which were shown to Bishop Morley.

These suggestions did not touch the essence of the question as between those in favour of an Establishment and those against one. They asked for the toleration of meeting-houses and of nonconforming ministers; and also for the same alterations as before in the liturgy and services. The subject was even brought forward in the House of Commons, but the shortness of the session obstructed its progress. And again the historian has to record one more abortive effort.*

On November 18, 1680, the House of Commons appointed a committee, who agreed on a comprehension with the Dissenters. The terms were much the same as before and were eagerly discussed in the House. One speaker declared that it would be much better to have a law for forcing the Dissenters to yield to the Church, and not to force the Church to yield to them. The Bill was committed, but was changed for another intended to relieve Protestant Dissenters from the penalties to which they were exposed. This latter Bill passed both Houses, but by the king's order it was shuffled off the table when he came to give his assent, and so never became law.

In 1689 the last effort at comprehension was made. A Bill was brought into the House of Commons by Nottingham, but although it proposed many admirable changes it was yet an anachronism. Public opinion had passed into other and wider channels; the Church was no longer regarded by outsiders with the same veneration; Presbyterian Nonconformists did not wish so vehemently to be

* Neal, vol. iv. p. 462, *et seq.*

comprehended ; the High Church clergy were horror-struck at the thought of lowering their standards ; and when it was proposed that the whole should be referred to a commission there were few, except Burnet, who did not rejoice at a way out of the difficulty. Burnet foresaw that this move would ruin all ; but the influence of Tillotson, who was as anxious as himself for a Broad Church, induced him to forego his objections. The Comprehension Bill passed through the House of Lords on April 5, 1689, and on entering the Lower House it encountered another of the same kind. While the two Bills lay on the table of the Commons both Houses agreed to an address to the king, praying that Convocation might be summoned. This was accompanied with a promise to give ease to Protestant Dissenters. It was a strategic movement to get rid of the subject of comprehension ; and, as we shall see, it succeeded.

Meanwhile, at the suggestion of Tillotson, and with the tardy concurrence of Burnet, the king issued, on 18th of September, 1689, an instrument for forming a commission to consider the relation of the Church to Dissenters. It consisted of thirty divines, ten of whom were bishops, and they began their labours on the 3rd of October in the Jerusalem Chamber. Of course Burnet was one of these, and a quotation from his elaborate history may serve to show that he was perfectly conscious of the ecclesiastical atmosphere which surrounded him :

“ All this while it was manifest that there were two different parties among the clergy ; one was firm and faithful to the present government and served it with zeal ; these did not envy the ease that the toleration gave them ; they wished for a favourable opportunity of making such alterations in some few rites and ceremonies as might bring into the Church those who were not at too great a distance from it ; and I do freely own that I was of this number. Others took the oaths indeed, and concurred in every act of compliance with the government, but they were not only cold in serving it, but were always

blaming the administration and aggravating misfortunes; they expressed a great esteem for Jacobites, and in all elections gave their vote for those that leaned that way; at the same time they showed great resentments against the Dissenters, and were enemies to the toleration, and seemed resolved never to consent to any alteration in their favour.”*

Soon after the commission began its work the Convocation of Canterbury was summoned. It met at Westminster Abbey on the 20th of November, 1689, and was composed, in the Upper House, of the bishops of the Province of Canterbury, and in the Lower House of 144 members, most of whom sat there in virtue of their office. In no sense was it a representative body, except that being clerical it embodied the clerical feeling of the country at large. Immense exertions were put forward in the case of those who were elected to choose only those who would oppose the hateful Comprehension Bill.

It was hoped by the court, which was now thoroughly favourable to the Dissenters, that Tillotson would be chosen Prolocutor of the Lower House. It was no secret, for Burnet had whispered it abroad, that Tillotson would be the archbishop in succession to Sancroft. There were few men more suited to this high position. His commanding eloquence, his learning, his suavity, his moderation towards Dissenters, his friendship with William and Mary, dating back to the time of their marriage, his sagacity and sanctity of life, all marked him out for this post. His mien and deportment were winsome. His biographer says that “his countenance was fair and very amiable, his face round, his eyes vivid, and his air and aspect quick and ingenuous; all which were the index of his excellent soul and spirit.”† The only one who doubted his fitness for the eminent position which he was afterwards to fill

* Burnet, p. 651.

† Birch's *Life of Tillotson*, p. 412.

was himself; if we may except the High Churchmen. These were his bitter opponents, and they showed their feeling by choosing Jane to be the Prolocutor of the Lower House.

This in itself was a sign of what was coming. The commission finished its work on November 18, 1689. But the spirit of Convocation, as manifested in the election of Jane the High Churchman, was sufficient to show that no vital alterations would be made in the rubrics, articles, or liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer, without the consent of the clergy at large. And so it proved. The Commission had laboured hard; but Convocation would have nothing to do or say about the results of its labours. It was thought by some derogatory, by others unlawful, and by most undesirable to propose terms of peace. And thus the High Church feeling which prevailed conquered the moderate counsels of men like Burnet and Tillotson, and the proposals of the Commission were rendered nugatory. They simply dropped into oblivion. They were embalmed in a blue book, and were only disinterred to be printed in the year 1854 by order of the House of Commons. The only practical interest which this scheme has is that it forms the model on which the American Episcopal Church has altered and revised its liturgy.*

Its historic interest, however, is still very great. The alterations of the Book of Common Prayer which the Commission proposed covered ninety pages and are 598 in number.† It would be impossible to describe these alterations in any detail. It may suffice to say that the Baptismal Service remained unsoftened in its sacramentarian expressions, that the surplice was made virtually optional; the ecclesiastical calendar was purged of many

* Stanley's *Westminster Abbey*, p. 522.

† Stoughton's *Church of the Revolution*, p. 136, n.

minor and doubtful saints' days; the Athanasian Creed after strong and long debate was left, but it was proposed to add a rubric to take the sting out of the damnatory clauses; the Catechism and Confirmation Service were improved in the Protestant direction; changes were introduced into the Marriage Service and into those for the Visitation of the Sick and for the Burial of the Dead; and the Collects were rewritten by Patrick. On the whole the drift of this revision was most decidedly in the Protestant direction, even though no alterations were made in the directly doctrinal parts. Calamy was, doubtless, too sanguine when he said that these changes would have brought in two-thirds of the Dissenters. But his statement shows at least that they were in accordance with Puritan sentiment.

They were never actually offered to Dissenters. The House of Commons, though composed very largely of Low Churchmen and Latitudinarians, was not earnest in the matter; Nottingham, who brought in the Comprehension Bill in the House of Lords, was himself a High Churchman; the Episcopalians were smarting from the treatment which their principles had received in Scotland; the Dissenters were not in love with liturgies of any kind, and were shy of the Church from which they had suffered so much in the past, and a large and growing number were in favour of the principles of pure voluntarism in religion. The paramount obstacle, however, was the feeling of the High Churchmen, and to their unconscious instrumentality, as Macaulay reminds us, we owe the liberties of England.*

But we must remember what perhaps Macaulay, with an eye only to striking effects, is apt to forget, viz., that the Nonconformists contained within their circle a band

* Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. iii. p. 121.

of High Churchmen of a very different and of a much nobler order. These men had gained, through much study and many sufferings, a clear conception of the essential nature of Christ's Church. And no blandishments could entice, even as no punishments could coerce, them from following that lofty ideal. High Churchmen they were in a sense quite other from that in which the words are employed in the jargon of parties. They had learned that Christianity was a living communion with a Divine Christ, and not conformity to forms, however sacred. To them a church was a congregation of faithful men loyal to the Saviour's commands, and drawn together by common spiritual sympathies: not a mere aggregate of persons associated together by the slender ties of geography or the secular bonds of nationality. They knew that religious truth could only be propagated by the persuasions of love and the provisions of voluntary zeal; not by the stiff and stereotyped machinery of a governmental control. And so while their patriotism had been proved by the severest tests, and had been found to be of the most heroic type, their churchmanship, in its purity, in its sacredness, in its divine inspiration, disdained the corrupting influences of worldliness; and if the offer of comprehension had been made, these men would still have remained true to Christ, to His Church, and to their own consciences.

The question in future years was not whether the Dissenters could be comprehended, but whether they would be able to hold the precious privileges they had obtained under the Toleration Act. We must leave the reign of William, and find ourselves in the somewhat different atmosphere of the reign of Queen Anne. As we walk in imagination down Fleet Street a sight meets us common enough then, but one to which our

modern eyes are entirely strangers. This sight is that of a man in the pillory. He is not being pelted with refuse, and is not the object of jeers and rude insults, the usual accompaniments of such scenes. On the contrary, he is surrounded by an admiring crowd, he has presents of fruits and flowers brought to him, and is the hero of the hour. This prisoner, none other than Daniel Defoe, the author subsequently of *Robinson Crusoe*, had been audacious enough to write a pamphlet, entitled *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. On February 25, 1708, the House of Commons resolved that this book should be burned by the common hangman; which was accordingly done. At the same time a proclamation was issued in the following terms:

"Whereas Daniel Defoe, alias De Fooe, is charged with writing a scandalous and seditious pamphlet, entitled *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. He is a middle-sized spare man, about forty years old, of a brown complexion, and dark-brown coloured hair, but wears a wig; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, gray eyes, and a large mole near his mouth," &c.

The proclamation offered £50 for his apprehension. He issued an explanation and an apology for his tractate; and as he found that others were likely to suffer for his offence, he surrendered himself to the authorities; and as a consequence found himself in the pillory, in honour of which he composed a sarcastic ode.*

A comprehension of this scene and of its bearings will enable us to take a glance at the workings of the English and Protestant mind in the reign of Queen Anne. The queen was a strong, not to say a bigoted Churchwoman.

* Defoe's Pamphlets, &c., vol. ii. p. 102. *Hymn to the Pillory*:

"Tell them it was because he was too bold,
And told those Truths which shou'd not ha' been told.
Extol the Justice of the Land,
Who punish what they will not understand."

Liberty had been conceded to the Dissenters ; but the concession had been wrung from unwilling hands. The bishops and clergy who had refused to take the oaths to William had admired and loved the Dissenters during the short hour when the destinies of the country were trembling in the balance. But these Nonjurors were very stiff in their notions as to what the true Church was. And though they left the overwhelming majority of their brethren still in the Establishment, yet their spirit of exclusiveness was largely admired and imbibed by those thus left behind. The spirit of persecution slumbered, but it was not dead. Fine theories as to comprehension, spun by Low Churchmen and Latitudinarians, angered the High Churchmen even more than they repelled the robust order of the Dissenters. It was taken for granted by thousands that the Established Church was the favourite of heaven, that she had the monopoly of grace, that she was the only true Church of Christ, and that it was therefore a sin to separate from her communion.

This spirit soon began to manifest itself in the reign of Queen Anne. A Bill against Occasional Conformity passed the House of Commons, by which it was proposed "that all those who had taken the Sacrament and Test for offices of trust or the Magistracy of Corporations, and who afterwards attended any meeting for religious worship of Dissenters, should be disabled from holding their employments, and pay a fine of £100, besides £5 for every day in which they continued to act in their employments after having been at any such meeting. They were also made incapable of holding any other employment till after one whole year's conformity to the Church." *

In the House of Lords this Bill met with violent opposition, and though the court exerted all its influence, and

* Stanhope, *Queen Anne*, vol. i. p. 90.

sent Marlborough, Godolphin, and Prince George, the Queen's Consort, to vote for it, the Whigs were too powerful; and in order to allay the storm which had been provoked, her Majesty was compelled to prorogue Parliament in February, 1708.*

The prevailing excitement was intensified by the trial and condemnation of Daniel Defoe at the Old Bailey, Feb. 24, 1708. In the previous June (June 8, 1702) the famous Henry Sacheverell had preached a discourse at Oxford, in which he had severely attacked the Dissenters, and had more especially condemned the lenity of the State in suffering them to hold offices of trust. This sermon, and a subsequent one, in which he complained of Dissenting academies as "fountains of lewdness," produced very bitter fruit. Defoe felt that the time had come for a sharp blow to be struck at these overweening and truculent designs. He was a master of plain, downright English; and he also possessed a deep fund of the keenest irony. Employing these two weapons, he brought out his *Shortest Way*, in which he said that the time had come to make an end of Dissenters. Every conceivable method had been tried in vain. They persisted in existing; and it was evident that only fire, sword, and the gallows would work the desirable consummation. The High Church party were delighted; one clergyman said that he valued the book next to the Bible;† the Dissenters were alarmed, and the Government perplexed beyond measure. The enemies of liberty were caught in a trap; and they revenged themselves by putting Defoe into the pillory, and fining him two hundred marks.

Meanwhile the Tories persisted in their efforts to pull down Dissent; and accordingly, in November, 1708, the

* Stanhope, *Queen Anne*, vol. i. pp. 91, 92.

† Burton's *Reign of Queen Anne*, vol. ii. p. 92.

Occasional Conformity Bill was again brought into the House of Commons and passed. When it reached the House of Lords it was stoutly opposed by Tenison,* who had been Archbishop of Canterbury since 1694, and above all by Bishop Burnet. The latter has given us an account of the speech which he delivered in the debate on this occasion, and amongst other just things we find these words, which have a noble ring about them: "I have long looked on liberty of conscience as one of the rights of human nature, antecedent to society, which no man could give up because it was not in his own power." † The bishops were equally divided; but the House rejected the measure by the decisive majority of twelve. ‡

The opponents of Dissent soon, however, returned to the charge, for in the same month, and in the same year (Nov. 14, 1704), leave was again given to bring a Bill in the House of Commons; and the ingenious device was made of tacking it to a Bill of Supply. The Tories were known for some time after as "Tackers." Their scheme, however, failed, for the tack was defeated in the House of Commons itself by 251 to 184 votes. The Bill being then sent (Dec. 14, 1708) separately and in a modified form to the House of Lords was defeated there by 71 to 51. §

Early in 1704 a similar Bill was again introduced, the same device was resorted to, the same defeat was met, and the same separation between the Bill and the Bill of Supply was made; and a similar debate took place in the House of Lords on its introduction there. The queen came to hear the discussion; party feeling ran high; but again the Bill was defeated, and this time by a majority

* Died Dec. 14, 1715.

† Burnet, *History of His Own Time*, p. 741.

‡ Ibid. p. 741. Skeats gives the numbers 70 to 59 (p. 220).

§ Burton, vol. i. p. 91.

of thirty-four, both Marlborough and Godolphin voting against it.

Seven years after (1711) the Bill was revived in order to cement a coalition between the Whigs and Tories. It was introduced by the Earl of Nottingham on December 15, 1711, and received the royal assent eight days after.

Defoe had written most strongly against the practice of occasional conformity which existed among the moderate Dissenters. He published an able pamphlet on the subject and entered into a controversy with Howe.* But he was strenuously opposed to the proposed law, and wrote with equal force and nerve against the persecuting spirit of his times.† If his conscience and his conduct had been harmonious with the clearness of his perceptions and with the vigour of his mind, he would have been one of the noblest champions of Nonconformity in our history. But the pliant nature of his activities led him to be the servant of many parties, but the leader of none.

When the Occasional Bill was passed, some of the leading Dissenters got out of the difficulty by giving up attendance at any public place of worship, after they had once taken office. Sir Thomas Abney, for example, an alderman of London, appointed the renowned Dr. Watts as his chaplain, and for seven years satisfied himself with his private ministrations. This course was, however, loudly denounced as a grievous departure from duty by certain Presbyterian ministers and others. Nor was this evasion of the Act satisfactory to those who had passed it. Their object was to stamp out Dissent, not to drive it to decent quietude, much less to allow it to be clothed with the dignity of municipal office. Accordingly, four years

* See *A True Collection of the Writings of the Author of "The True-born Englishman."* London, 1705. Vol. i. pp. 303, 323, 384.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 320.

later the Schism Bill was introduced into the House of Commons (May 12, 1714). The object of the Bill was to shut up all the Dissenting colleges, or academies, as they were then called, and also all the schools controlled by Nonconformists. Its ultimate purpose was, by destroying the power of the Dissenters, to bring the Pretender to the throne, and to further the designs of the Jacobites. That such a Bill could be introduced, and being introduced could have been carried as we shall see, needs a small amount of elucidation.

Let us, therefore, glance back a moment at what are called the Sacheverell commotions. * We have already noticed two sermons preached at Oxford by this redoubtable divine. These were insignificant in their effects compared with a third which he delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral, November 5, 1709. In this he boldly attacked the doctrines of the Revolution,† and denounced the mildness with which Dissenters had been treated. The Government, incited by Godolphin, and fearing the spread of Jacobitism, determined to impeach the preacher. Thackeray has given us, in one of his choicest works, a picture of the contending political currents in the reign of Queen Anne. ‡ And when we try to measure the depth of that tide which threatened, during her reign, to bring back the Stuarts to the English throne, we need not wonder that a Government, loyal to the Hanoverian succession, should seek to strike a decisive blow in favour of their views. Our task does not lead us to take up these purely political threads, but a recollection of their existence will enable us to understand the passions aroused by the trial of Henry Sacheverell, D.D. Regarded personally, he was a clergyman whose name would never have been known beyond his own parish ; but the accidents

* Burton, *Queen Anne*, vol ii. chaps. xi., xii.

† Skeats, p. 239.

‡ Esmond.

of his time made him the symbol of passions which were stirring in the hearts of the unthinking mob and the high-handed Tories. The crowds knelt for his blessing as he proceeded day by day to Westminster Hall. The crowds became an ungovernable mob. Daniel Burgess, one of the most popular Dissenting ministers of the metropolis, had his meeting-house pulled down; Salter's Hall and other places of worship were burnt, and the spirit of rage against the Dissenters had to be quelled by the military. When Sacheverell was condemned to three years' silence, the sentence was regarded as a virtual acquittal, and he went through the country as the favourite of the queen and as the idol of the multitudes. He rose like froth on the turbulent waves of popular passion, but as he was only an ecclesiastical fanatic and a political charlatan, he has no personal place in history.

This outburst is, however, sufficient to indicate that deep currents of political hatred, commingling with streams of ecclesiastical rancour, existed beneath the surface of English life. We need not wonder, therefore, at the rapid passage of the Schism Bill four years later. Introduced into the House of Commons on May 12, 1714, so rapid was its progress that it received the queen's signature on June 25th; and was ordered to come into operation on August 1st. That day was Sunday, and as Bishop Burnet was driving through Smithfield he met Thomas Bradbury, the minister of Fetter Lane Congregational Church, and stopping him on that spot consecrated by the ashes of many of England's noblest martyrs, asked him why he looked so sad. It seems to have been the habit of those quiet but much-enduring men to link themselves on to the past, and to draw inspiration from the very soil over which they had to pass to their sacred duties. It was so with Bradbury, as he wended his way that Sunday morning over the historic ground of Smithfield. "I am thinking,"

he said to Burnet, "whether I shall have the constancy and resolution of that noble company of martyrs whose ashes are deposited in this place; for I most assuredly expect to see similar times of violence and persecution, and that I shall be called to suffer in a like cause."

Burnet tried to comfort the sad but heroic man by telling him that the queen was hopelessly ill, and that he was expecting her death every hour, in which event it was understood that the Schism Act would be a dead letter. As Burnet was then on his way to the palace, he promised to send a messenger to Fetter Lane, who was to drop a handkerchief from the front of the gallery if the queen had died. The messenger arrived during the service, the signal was given, and in the closing prayer Bradbury thanked Almighty God for the accession of King George I., and implored the Divine blessing on the new sovereign.* Thus the death bell of the old order of repression and persecution, and the golden bell of the new order of growing freedom and of far-distant but sure-coming religious equality, were both fittingly rung by a Nonconformist.

Our journey during this lecture has been a long one, and it has been marked by distinct progress. We have been compelled in our narrative to keep within certain strict bounds, and almost to forget the great outside world. The struggle between France on the one hand, under Louis XIV. and his able generals Condé, Turenne, and Villars, and the Netherlands on the other, under the consummate leadership of William of Orange, and finally, England being involved in the wars, under the generalship of the unscrupulous Marlborough—this belongs to general history. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, by which 400,000 Frenchmen were turned away from French soil, throws a lurid light on the policy which

* Skeats, p. 274.

James wished to pursue in our country, and which, if he had had his way, would have issued in the same results. The refusal of the Scotch to pass a Toleration Bill in 1690, after the abolition of Episcopacy in the previous year, and the exclusion of Roman Catholics from municipal corporations in Ireland by the Irish Parliament of 1691—these events show that some of the very first principles of justice were not understood. Those who did understand them formed a little world by themselves. The old Puritan feeling and life held on its way, and contained within it seeds of vitality, which only waited the preaching of Wesley and Whitfield to wake it to a glorious harvest. Meanwhile it showed itself in sober and decorous forms. There was nothing now of agony, of Titanic strength, of intense wrestling, as in Cromwell's days; or as when Milton sang, or as when Baxter preached at Kidderminster. The black gown was still a symbol of awe to the children, even as they plucked it in order to gain their minister's smile. The sermons and prayers were long and full of subdivisions. The very pews in the new meeting-houses seemed, in the absence of racks and thumb-screws, intended to crucify the flesh. But though the heroism which strikes the eye had inevitably gone, the life was still existent. Arianism would wither up the strength of the Presbyterians; but Independents, Baptists, and Quakers still maintained a holy separation from all that they considered unclean and unchristian.

Literature had changed its tone. Samuel Johnson, born in 1705, had of course to exert his influence later on. But the reign of Queen Anne was marked by a chaste and quiet and withal a dignified style, harmonious with the prevailing tints of the religious life, embodied in the essays of Addison and Steele. But there was a corruption in the literature of the day which compelled men of serious moral tone to form a world among

themselves. The plays of Wycherley (1640-1715) and of Congreve (1670-1729), the novels of Aphra Behn (1642-1690), the translations of Dryden, (1631-1700), the filthiness of Swift (1667-1745), and Defoe's mirror of immoral life, need only to be mentioned to show how necessary it was to draw a sharp line between the Church and the world. If in drawing that line godly men shut out some good things, we must remember that they also shut out a large number of bad things. In any case, they were not far wrong in holding before them a lofty ideal of Christian purity, of unswerving righteousness, and of undaunted and courageous godliness.

What they had to do for themselves and unconsciously for us was to make plain the meaning and nature of a Christian Church. It was in some respects easier for their fathers to fight for existence against the frowns and the arms of the tyrant, than it was for them to maintain their convictions amid the enervating air of toleration. The schemes of comprehension of which we have spoken wreathed themselves like clouds about their minds, and it might seem that they were in danger of forgetting the noble mission which they had to perform for the salvation of their country. All honour to them that they withstood this insidious influence. The tonic of God's Word kept them true. The living Spirit held them in personal communion with Christ. The love of their Lord was the adamant bond of their mutual fellowship.

They have taught us that historic Churches ought not to dazzle the imagination if they do not speak the truth. They have proved by actual experiment that all the functions of a Christian Church can be fulfilled when that Church receives nothing more from the State than the protection which is given to two or three of the humblest citizens when they stop to greet one another in the marketplace. They have shown that men may be noble in their

citizenship without being sycophants at the shrine of an established religion. And by the patience of their piety and the pathos of their endurance they have told us that we have only to be true to our convictions as to the spirituality of Christ's kingdom and the supremacy of Christ's rule in order to bring even our ecclesiastical opponents to receive with a thankful hand the enormous blessings which are in store for our country when we have a free Church in a free state. It may seem a hard fact to some generous minds that a comprehensive State Church is as far off now as it was in 1689. To ourselves it is an unspeakable consolation. Such an arrangement could only be brought about by stifling truth, by gagging the evangelical faith, and by bringing in a dreary reign of sentimental religious negations, under which the country would be soothed into a calm but unhealthy Agnostic slumber. Meanwhile, under the healthy development of denominationalism devoid of bitterness, the evangelical faith has deepened its roots in our loved land, and a true spirit of Christian and chivalrous unity has been quietly but surely fostered among differing Churches, especially among those which have been at once free from State shackles and Evangelical in their principles. An organized uniformity which shall include men of all shades of thought and of none, or which shall endeavour to encircle those who hold contradictory opinions, is but a dream. And even if it were not so, it would be our function to make it a dream. Freedom with us is not only a right, it is a responsibility. None are more solemnly bound than we to maintain in its integrity the gospel of the New Testament. Our very liberty to alter the forms of our belief according to the changing and expanding knowledge of the day ought to make us the more sensitive to maintain its substance untouched by the inroads of corroding unbelief. Genuine charity will never demand from us the

surrender or compromise of our dearest convictions. The England of to-day is hungering for the definite and Divine message which we are commissioned to deliver. And other Churches of every name will respect us only in as far as we respect ourselves. While if ever we should be tempted to swerve from the straight path of truth for the sake of ecclesiastical ease and self-complacency, the Past would come forth from dungeons and from scenes of mortal agony with stern and yet beseeching countenance to bid us be faithful even unto death.

“Faith of our fathers, living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;
Oh how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene’er we hear that glorious word!
Faith of our fathers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death.

“Faith of our fathers, we will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife,
And preach thee, too, as love knows how,
By kindly words and virtuous life.
Faith of our fathers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death.”

VII.

*THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL LIBERTY IN
THE GEORGIAN ERA.*

BY

J. B. BROWN, B.A.

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VII.

THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL LIBERTY IN THE GEORGIAN ERA.

THE first, the fundamental condition in the struggle for liberty, is men who mean to be free. That factor, happily, has never been wanting in England since Englishmen have had a history. Nay, the history of our struggle for freedom stretches back beyond the old English days. Nowhere did the Roman despotism meet with such stern resistance as in Britain; and Caractacus and Boadicea are names of renown in the history of struggles for liberty still.

With our German forefathers liberty was the ruling passion. The freeman on his farm, his house his fortress, king and priest in his home, is the radical unit in German society; in classical society the ruling idea is the State. *Colunt discreti ac diversi; ut fons, ut campus, ut nemus placuit*, is the description of the habit of life of our fathers, by a master's hand. They settled in our land like those Jews in Canaan, the freest, the hardiest, the most unconquerable people in the world. Their fierce independence hardly brooked the restraints of citizenship; and yet the cohesion of the community was strong. The tribe was compact, though its members were sternly jealous of their freedom; and with all their rude love of liberty, the capacity for organization, always on the basis of freedom, is a marked feature of their character. Races of

German blood have produced the two strongest results of organization that the world perhaps has ever witnessed—the modern German army, and the English administrative service in India. Hegel holds that the German age of civilization is the Christian age; and it cannot be questioned that there is a remarkable capacity in the German races to receive and develop the purest and loftiest Christian ideas. In classical society the man was individualized slowly, extricated from the State as it were, and made fully conscious of his individual responsibilities. The Jew and the German were individualized from the first; each started with a clear apprehension of what was meant by a man. Among both peoples from the first, too, the woman had singular honour. You must go back to Miriam and Deborah to find the likeness to the Veledas and Aurinias of German story. It is the free, ennobling, individualizing force in Christianity which the German races have taken home most gladly; with the Latin races the Church always is supreme.

Our fathers settled in England as resolute and capable freemen, accustomed to take full part in the conduct of the most weighty public affairs. It is the habit of free political discussion and decision which gives its special character to English liberty. The French States-General might be called together from time to time at great crises, but the habit of political thought and action was wanting; and no States-General can for a moment be compared as an instrument of political action with the old English assembly of the people, and its child, the English House of Commons; because in both you have a body of men representing the people, who have never lost the habit of taking personal interest and part in political affairs. It is this habit, for the most part wanting abroad, which restrains freedom in our country from excesses, and maintains the orderly and stately progress of the commonwealth,

“ Whose freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent.”

And it is a singular and happy feature in our public liberty that it has again and again acquired fresh development and stability, through events which seemed to threaten it with utter destruction. The death of Harold on the field of Senlac gave a completeness and finality to the Norman Conquest which is unique in history. The English continued to writhe and to moan, but the Norman yoke was riveted firmly and sternly at once. William—who was in a sense the first of modern kings, ruling freemen in freedom, and holding the balance of conflicting and mutually destructive forces, the true head of a richly articulated system—created all unconsciously the nucleus of the great middle class of landed proprietors, separated by a wide gulf from the Norman nobility on the one hand, and the peasantry on the other, which was the backbone of the resistance to tyranny in the earlier ages; and out of it in large measure the new middle class, which has led the conflict in the later ages, has sprung. William, who had a keen perception of those tendencies of feudalism which made the kings of France for generations the puppets of their great vassals, so distributed the fiefs among his nobles as to guard against an overwhelming local influence in any one of them. But the tendencies of feudalism to aggregation would have been too strong for royal manipulation, if there had not been on the land a strong body of inferior nobility, who could not be crushed down to the dead level of the commonalty, but who could not become formidable like the great Norman barons; and who formed an invaluable intermediate link between the Norman nobility and the people. The contest was not simply between king and noble, or between the ruling class and the peasant class. Always after the Conquest there was a strong middle stratum of society, looked down

upon by the nobles, looked up to by the people, which gave the Crown some support against the pressure of the nobles on the one hand, and the people some shield against the tyranny of their rulers on the other. The work of Stephen Langton for the liberties of England is a noble instance of the kind of influence which was wielded by the class I am endeavouring to describe. And the Conquest welded the English race in all its classes and provinces—and it was breaking up into provinces before the invasion—together as one man ; and gave to it a sacred tradition in the laws of the Confessor, which it was ever urging upon the Norman and Angevin kings. Thus was formed the most important political class in the community, and thus it was trained from the first in the practical handling of political affairs. Out of this class the firmest champions of liberty in successive generations came forth ; and out of this class too, under Elizabeth, issued mainly the adventurous spirits who in her glorious reign founded that new power, which lent its strength in the coming reigns to the yeomanry and the squirearchy, the power of trade. Elizabeth's is a name of evil omen when liberty is the matter in hand. A monarch of imperious will and despotic temper, she yet did more to secure the ultimate triumph of the popular party than any monarch who has ever occupied the throne. Her policy was distinctly the consolidation of England and the development of her trade. She kept a stern hand on political and religious sectaries of all sorts, who were found in her reign in every rank, but strongest among the small proprietors in the country and the mercantile classes in the towns. But the way in which in the Parliament of 1601 she yielded, not with grace only but with heartiness, on the question of monopolies, which threatened something like a rebellion, and redressed the grievance at once, shows how truly she gauged the forces which were at work for liberty in England,

and how worthy she was to rule the free English State. But I hold it to be of supreme importance to the full development of the liberties of England, that the contest of the people with the Crown was postponed until the dynastic question was settled, and it could be fought out on its merits without foreign complication ; and until the towns grew strong and rich by the trade which she fostered. London was the backbone of the party which carried the greatest political struggle of which this world has been the theatre to a triumphant consummation ; and the London of Charles Stuart was mainly the creation of the thrifty policy, the wise comprehension, the sharp discipline, and the splendid adventure of Elizabeth's reign. I say the sharp discipline, because I hold it to be of the very highest advantage to the development of our liberties that a strong hand was kept on religious and political movements in the days of Elizabeth. It threw the energy of the nation into other, and for the moment more important, forms of activity, and led to that splendid development of literature, discovery, maritime enterprise, and commerce, which distinguished her reign. The result was that when in the Stuart era the battle had to be fought out to the end, the weight of intelligence and wealth was on the right, the popular side. It was the purse of the great towns behind Cromwell's Ironsides, who were largely recruited from the lower middle class, which laid a despotic throne and a tyrannous Church in the dust.

The strength of the Parliamentary party through the great struggle lay in the yeomen, the more sober of the smaller gentry, and the merchants and craftsmen in the towns. These were just the representatives of that middle class which in all ages has been not only present but active in English political life, and to whom more than to any other influence the order, the stability, and the resolute but by no means hasty march of our progress as a people is due.

There was no September massacre, or hellish Saturnlia of lust and blood, between the fall of the monarchy and the establishment of a firm and stable government in our great Revolution, as in France ; because a class of men, with a large stake in the country, accustomed to political thought and action, led the movement, and never suffered the guidance to slip out of their hands ; and further, and higher, because the men of that class as a rule feared the King of kings, and sought with passionate earnestness to know the mind of God as revealed in His Word, and to do His will in the conduct of this English State. "Many days of prayer have I known," says Oliver Heywood, "my father keep among God's people ; yea, I remember a whole night wherein he and several more did pray all night in a parlour at Ralph Whittal's, upon occasion of King Charles demanding the five members. Such a night of prayers, tears, and groans I was never present at in all my life." Men like that are simply invincible ; and, more than that, they will keep a strong hand upon themselves, and remember justice and mercy in the hour of victory. When in the world's history was an army welcomed to a district as Cromwell's Ironsides were everywhere welcomed, because of the sobriety, the justice, the order, the piety which they brought in their train ?

I hold that the Protectorate was the noblest attempt at the Christian government of men which has ever been made in the course of the world's history. It failed inevitably for two reasons. It was but man's idea of the Christian State, not God's, which the Independents strove to establish. The Christian State is larger, freer, more manifold, more highly articulated, more comprehensive, more one, than any man's scheme of government ; and the whole of man's life could not develop itself freely, even on the broad, firm platform which Cromwell laid down, and maintained while he lived with an iron hand. Still

a very noble part of man's life—the noblest—found there such a field of action and such room for growth as no political estate has furnished since man has had a history. But in the nature of things, being but a man's vision of the kingdom, it was born to die; leaving, however, the grandest legacy to its heirs. And it fell as we learn from 1 Sam. viii. that the theocracy fell. The life it proposed to man was too lofty, too pure, too earnest. The Jews would have a king, and rejected God from being king over them; they were afraid of God and the highest levels of life. So with the English under the Protectorate. Bravely, strenuously, Cromwell strove to rule them in the largest freedom for their good. But the mark was too high, the air was too keen; only the most intense and lofty natures could bear the strain, and live up on the height. The people were ever bearing down to the lower levels, and the strong hand of military power was needed—sadly enough Cromwell felt it—to maintain the State. The major-generals who were his satraps in the provinces were not Cromwells; and the people, proud as they were of their Protector, and of the height to which he had lifted England, groaned under the pressure of the iron hand. If the army had not been of such matchless moral quality, the pressure would have been intolerable. Such an army as that was never seen in the world before or since. They came out of the finest, strongest, purest stratum of English society. They met the chivalrous daring of the Cavaliers with the sterner daring of faith in God. Wherever they went the people welcomed them as protectors—nay, pastors. There was more care for the religious welfare of the people in their ranks than in all the Laudean churches. They marched to the music of hymns, and their battle-songs were psalms. “Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; and let them also that hate Him flee before Him,” rolled from Cromwell's lips down the ranks of his

Ironsides, when the sun flashed out of the rain-clouds on the morning of Dunbar ; and as the sun flashed out of the mists and scattered them, the Ironsides flashed upon the foe. I suppose that man for man they were the strongest army that ever stood on the field of battle. I doubt if the Athenians of Miltiades, the Spartans of Leonidas, the phalanx of Alexander, the Tenth Legion of Cæsar, the Infantry of Alva, the Grenadiers of Frederic, the Old Guard of Napoleon, or the New German Guard, man for man, could have stood against them. No enemy ever saw their backs. They won with fell certainty in every field. Abroad they drove the finest infantry of Spain in rout before them, and dashed into and carried a counterscarp which had just been pronounced impregnable by the ablest marshal of France. One of the most notable sights recorded in history is that army, the strongest army in Europe, gathered grim and stern on Blackheath, when King Charles passed on from exile to begin his shameful and hateful reign. They knew that their day was over, that their work was done. They knew that other men and other scenes than those which they had known would occupy the stage. They knew that their God would be dishonoured, and their heroes held up to scorn ; but quietly, because they saw it was the right thing to do, they disbanded themselves, and vanished among the peaceful population once more. No mutiny, no brawling, no scenes of rapine, cruelty, and lust, as when soldiers elsewhere are released from service. They went home peacefully, one to his farm, another to his merchandize, another to his craft ; and so well and piously did they bear themselves, that if ever a workman attracted attention by his diligence and sobriety, men said, " Ah ! that must be one of Cromwell's old soldiers." That army, that victory, and that peaceful disbandment when their work was done, the Independents gave to their country. Fifty thousand

men of that temper, scattering themselves among the population, would be as a saving salt amid the corruption in which it would soon be wallowing. They with the wreck of the Puritan party, betaking themselves to country halls and village homes, bore with them the principles for which they had fought and bled, and leavened with them the country life of England. They formed the nucleus of that great Nonconformist party which took the torch from their hand as they dropped it, and bore it onward to light them to new triumphs; the vanguard ever in the army of freedom, the prærogative tribe in the forum of the world.

It failed, as it was bound to fail—the Protector's scheme of a Christian State. Its form perished, as it was bound to perish. God's plan of a perfect human society is not a huge Independent Church. But its spirit lived on, and is animating us still. The mad policy of Church and King on black Bartholomew's day carried at once into a new independent body its sacred tradition. Slowly, painfully, generation by generation, it has leavened our statecraft with the principles of Christianity, and there is a closer connection than some of our Liberal leaders would care to recognize between Puritan politics and that masterpiece of Christian statesmanship—the Land Act of the present year.

The Restoration age was a wanton outburst of the sensual folly and vanity of mankind. It was of the earth earthy. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot it was full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores. Long repressed and subjected to a godly discipline which it hated, in the Restoration era it took its revenge. Charles himself was a much abler man than is popularly supposed. He had something of the shrewdness and insight of his grandfather. But his one concern was to keep his head upon his shoulders by making himself as independent as possible of Parliament, while cautiously avoiding extremi-

ties ; and to use his head, which was capable of much nobler work, in getting out of life all the pleasure which it would yield.

The whole public life and the upper social life were corrupt to the core, and had no blushes for their corruption. Like a school broke loose after hard tasks, the age cared for nothing but enjoyment, and set itself to harry and abase the men and the things which had afflicted it in every possible way. It is hard to realize the lengths to which men will go in reaction, especially after such a long, stern strain as the Commonwealth. We have had just a little example of it in our times. What is called the Conservative reaction, which placed the Tories so triumphantly in power, was just a reaction after the long, stern strain of the Government which disestablished the Irish Church. Men had been kept breathless by the magnitude and the rapidity of the reforms which were pressed upon them by one who never spares himself if he never spares his party; and the country thought, and may think again, that it wanted a little spell of rest from these high demands, these lofty enterprizes, which keep thought and effort on stretch, and weary all but the highest powers. And then, when men are resting, the devil of vanity, vainglory, and grasping ambition, as we too have seen, finds them ready to his hand. The England of the Restoration went far enough in tyranny, in bigotry, in meanness, in profligacy, in foulness, to make us blush that it forms an era in our history ; though a man as able as Clarendon did call it, "such a prodigious act of Providence as God hath scarce vouchsafed to any nation since He led His own chosen people through the Red Sea." Concerning which we can only say that if these are mercies it is a mercy that they are so few. But nothing can be a greater mistake than to suppose that the great movement of the Commonwealth was abortive, and left nothing but the memory of great

deeds to our history. The shameful degradation of the public and the court life of the Restoration, simply drove the principles of the Puritans in. Banished from the high places, the public places, of the nation, they drew inwards, wiser and purer through the discipline which they had suffered, and mixed themselves with the inner life of the people. They betook themselves to the farms of the yeomanry, the halls of the squirearchy, the cottages of the villagers, the marts of the merchants, the shops of the tradesmen, the looms and the forges of the craftsmen, and there tinctured deeply the purest, strongest, healthiest stratum of our English society. Working there, by Non-conformist conventicles, Methodist meetings, pious books, evangelic hymns, aided mightily by the great stir of thought with which the eighteenth century was filled, they created a body of pious, intelligent, resolute, persistent, and indomitable champions of liberty and progress, which in the Georgian era fought their way to the front rank, and were the backbone of the party which wrung from a blindly bigoted Church, and a fiercely hostile aristocracy and king, religious, political, and municipal reform.

I think that the eighteenth century is, on the whole, a good deal too much maligned. It has been regarded for the most part as a selfish, sceptical, mercenary, impure, and artificial age, compared with the great age which preceded it, and the still greater age which followed it—in the midst of which it is our privilege to live and work. Certainly its character could not be called heroic; and its standard of practical morals was so low as to put righteousness and even honesty into eclipse. History probably could hardly present in any one century such a long list of profligate statesmen, and such systematic pollution of personal and domestic life as stains its annals. Its evil moral reputation has not unnaturally blinded us to the remarkable ferment in things intellectual, social, political,

and moral, which was working through its generations, and was the parent of that stately and splendid nineteenth century progress in which we rejoice. That eighteenth century sowed with sore toil and travail most of the germs whose harvest we are reaping now. It opened that new era of human progress which is based upon the dignity, the rights, and the powers of the individual man; and which is developing with wonderful rapidity in these days the faculties and functions of the great mass of the people, as the solid base on which the commonwealth rests. The principles began to be formulated in that eighteenth century which now in this nineteenth are bearing such happy and peaceful fruits. Still it shows a sad want of heroic forms, heroic actions, and heroic lives. Pope was its most brilliant poet, Walpole its most successful statesman, Johnson its most accomplished man of letters, and Hume its most characteristic and influential philosopher. But amid all the stir of its action and declamation—and there was something too much of the latter—one misses the tramp of Cromwell's imperial footstep, and the music of Milton's majestic line. It was an age of great controversies and great inquiries, in which new and fruitful formulæ of thought and methods of investigation were evolved; and in which a new departure was taken in the fields of man's social, political, and religious life. It will be understood more clearly as the generations run on, that the century which formulated the principles and generated the forces of the great French Revolution was one of the most notable eras in universal history. There is a sad wintry look about it, though, compared with the great summer which preceded it, and the spring of a greater summer which has followed it; but in winter the sap is busy in the roots, and the root fibres are lancing into the soil. Men are all too oblivious of the ministries of winter, in the glorious brightness and fragrance of the spring which

reveals its work, and spreads before the sun the fruit of its tears and toils. Few centuries in man's history have done so much germinating work.

And the Georgian era is as the mid-winter of the century to those who watch only the surface, and have no thought of what is stirring beneath—at least till the superb genius of the elder Pitt broke the spell, and woke the stir which led on to the great deeds of the revolutionary time. Under the earlier Georges the vital movement in society was very obscure; the atmosphere was very ungenial; the new family was very unsympathetic; the morals of the Court were very unholy; and the one thing which could arouse the faintest enthusiasm was liberty. For liberty's sake the few able statesmen, who carried through the transference of the royal authority so easily to the new House, made the best of the new conditions; and the people were with them, though the enthusiasm, poor as it was, was mainly confined to the Protestant Dissenters. But the greatest blow ever struck in England at the Stuart ideas of monarchy and its relation to the subject, which was one main obstacle to the growth of our constitutional liberties, had been delivered in the elevation of the new House by the act of the nation, under a Parliamentary title, to the throne; whereby the king became manifestly the elect of the nation and not the elect of the Lord, except so far as *vox populi, vox Dei* expresses a truth. And incidentally I hope to show that it dealt a serious stroke to the other great enemy with which our liberties had to struggle—the selfishness and bigotry of the Established Church. But the atmosphere of the public life of England till past the middle of the century was perhaps colder and duller than at any period of our history; and the deepest depth of dulness was reached by the life of the Court. But winter is dull, as I have said; there was stir enough in what was working beneath the surface. The sacred tradi-

tions of freedom which had been handed down by the past, were being, with more or less of stormy strife in the intellectual and spiritual regions, wrought into the heart of all that was best and strongest in the community.

I have not touched, even in outline, the history of the Restoration and the Revolution. In a course of lectures like this, every one is bound to keep to his own topic, and enough has been said, and well said, on these themes already. Much of the legislation of the reign of Charles II. was aimed at the religious liberties of the people, and was a cruel and often brutal restraint upon their freedom of belief, worship, and ministry. The Corporations Act and the Test-Act made religion a civil disqualification, and shut out a large, intelligent, industrious, and high-principled class of the citizens from the spheres of civic and civil duty; refusing them all opportunity of exercising their faculties and giving play to their patriotism in the noble fields of public service which were open to the members of the Established Church. These Acts put a brand on the Nonconformists as citizens unfit or unworthy to serve their country, and doomed them to remain "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to the Established "congregation of the Lord."

I am not about to occupy your time with what might prove a tedious narrative of the successive stages of the conflict, with an analysis of the hostile measures, and a chronological account of those Acts of relief which were wrung from an unwilling State and Church in successive generations, which ended in the repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts in 1828. In other words, I am not attempting a history within the compass of a lecture. I must presume some acquaintance with the outlines of the history, which are very easily accessible, and ask you to consider with me in a broad and rapid way, which alone is consistent with my limits, the nature and the pressure

of the forces which in the eighteenth century were hostile to the development of the liberty of the subject—in other words, the foe with which our fathers had to fight ; and, on the other hand, the events and influences which favoured the cause of freedom, and which enabled its champions to conduct the struggle to complete and final success.

But it may be useful for those whose memories are a little hazy on the history of the movement, just to indicate, with the dates, the leading incidents of the battle from the Restoration to 1866, when the removal of civil disabilities on account of religious belief was substantially complete. It is one long, stern struggle stretching through two hundred years.

The first blow after the Restoration in 1660 on the part of the enemies of liberty was aimed at the towns, which had been the backbone of the popular party through the civil war. In 1661 an Act was passed, entitled "An Act for the well-governing and regulating of Corporations," which demanded from all members of a Corporation the following declaration : "I do declare and believe that it is not lawful on any pretence whatsoever to take arms against the King ; and I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those who are commissioned by him, so help me God." And it further enacted "That no person or persons shall for ever or hereafter be placed, elected, or chosen, in or to any of the offices or places aforesaid, that shall not have within one year next before such election or choice taken the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the rites of the Church of England."

In 1662 the celebrated Uniformity Bill was passed, by which some two thousand of the most godly ministers in England were compelled to resign their livings ; and which did, all unwittingly, noble service to our English State by

creating, or I should rather say organizing anew, the famous party of Nonconformists—the noblest party, it seems to me, known to history. Some effort of the King to exercise a dispensing power came to nothing. The legislature was jealous of it, both on political and religious grounds, believing that it was a most dangerous pretension in the monarch, and that the ultimate object of it was to shield the Papists. But it was in no love or pity for the Nonconformists that the King was compelled to drop it, for in 1664 the Conventicle Act was passed, which sought to crush Nonconformist worship. It was entitled “An Act to prevent and suppress seditious Conventicles,” and it forbade, under penalties which on the third infraction rose to transportation, “any person of the age of sixteen years and upwards, being a subject of the Realm, to be present at any Assembly, Conventicle, or Meeting, under colour or pretence of any exercise of religion, in other manner than is allowed by the Liturgy or practice of the Church of England in any place within the realm, at which Conventicle, Meeting, or Assembly, there should be present five persons or more assembled together over and above those of the same household.” This was followed in 1665 by the atrocious Five-Mile Act, which aimed at crushing Nonconformist ministries. It was entitled “An Act for restraining Nonconformists from inhabiting Corporations,” and it enacted that—

“All such person or persons as shall take upon them to preach in any unlawful Assembly, Conventicle, or Meeting, under colour or pretence of any exercise of religion contrary to the laws and statutes of this kingdom, shall not at any time, unless only passing upon the road, come or be within five miles of any City or Town Corporate or Borough that sends Burgesses to Parliament within his Majesty's kingdom or within five miles of any Parish, Town, or Place, wherein he or they since the Act of Oblivion have been Pastor, Vicar, or Curate Stipendary or Lecturer.”

In 1670 a new Conventicle Act was passed, moderating

some of the penalties of the former Act, but in reality increasing its stringency through the power which it gave to officers to break open houses, and the encouragement which it lent to informers. In 1672 Charles issued a Declaration of Indulgence, to which, however, the Lord Keeper refused to affix the great seal. He assumed to order, in virtue of his ecclesiastical powers, "that all manner of penal laws on matters ecclesiastical, against whatever sort of Nonconformists or recusants, should from that day be suspended." The Declaration led to the opening of prison doors and the release of captives—Bunyan being among the number—to the resumption of Nonconformist services, and general joy. The immediate results were so remarkable that the bishops were alarmed. One of them writes: "These licensed persons increase strangely. The orthodox poor clergy are out of heart." It is a notable confession. A few months' freedom to the Nonconformists made the clergy tremble for their flocks. But when it was brought before Parliament in 1678, the Commons resolved "that penal statutes in matters ecclesiastical cannot be suspended but by consent of Parliament," and refused all supplies till the Declaration was recalled. In this matter of the Indulgence the Nonconformists acted with the high principle and the patriotism which distinguished them, and Alderman Love, member for the City, spoke the mind of an influential body of the Nonconformists in these noble words:

"I am a Dissenter, and, unhappily, thereby obnoxious to the law. . . . The law against Dissenters I should be glad to see repealed by the same authority that made it; but while it is law the King cannot repeal it by Proclamation, and I had much rather see the Dissenters suffer by the rigour of the law, than see all the laws of England trampled under the foot of the prerogative, as in this example."

After a brief struggle Charles was compelled, though in much bitterness of spirit, to yield. But again, it was in no

love to the Nonconformists that the dispensing power was condemned. Instead of setting their toleration on a legal basis, the Parliament passed the Test Act through both houses in 1678 without opposition, and the King, knowing well that a dissolution would raise a storm which he dared not face—there was always the axe and the block in the background of his memory—was compelled to ratify it. It provided that—

“All persons bearing any office of Trust should receive the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England, should take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and should make this declaration : ‘I do declare that I believe there is no transubstantiation in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, or in the elements of bread and wine at or after the consecration thereof by any person whatsoever.’”

It is but fair to say, as may be gathered from the explicitness of the Transubstantiation Clause, that the Act was aimed at the Papists ; growing alarm being felt at the religious proclivities of the heir to the throne, and indeed of the King himself. The result was startling. The Duke of York proclaimed himself a Catholic, and resigned his office as Lord High Admiral ; while Clifford and hundreds of others followed his example. The Nonconformists, through their hatred of Popery, and their sense of the imminent danger to the State, kept silence. Had they joined the Court party it is probable that they might have defeated the Bill. But again they postponed their own relief as Dissenters to the view which they took as patriots of the interests of the country. Shaftesbury and Buckingham assured the Dissenters who did not oppose it, says Calamy, “that a clause would be inserted in their favour in some other Act in the same session, but it was never done ;” and so they secured the passing of the Bill. But I cannot affect any deep sorrow that, as the Nonconformists consented to the Test Act as a security against the Papists, they had to feel the pinch of it themselves. In

truth, they helped effectually to rivet the yoke which for two hundred years was crushed down on their own necks. We talk bravely now in contempt of tests. But we are not yet quite out of the wood into the daylight. Mr. Bradlaugh has not found an open door to the House of Commons; and it would be curious to watch the attitude of the English people if there were a likelihood of an Ultramontane Papist occupying the British throne. The Test Act completed the repressive legislation. This was the ground on which the battle had to be fought in the succeeding reigns.

In 1680 a Bill for the Toleration of Protestant Dissenters passed both Houses of Parliament; but because of the exception of the Papists, it was, by a shameless trick of the Court, withdrawn from the Royal assent. Then a fierce persecution arose, fanned by the reaction which followed the madness of the Popish plot, in which Nonconformists suffered severely. Dr. Stoughton, in his invaluable history, has copied out of an old church book the entry, "We sung a psalm in a low voice," which suggests many thoughts. The last days of Charles were dark days for the Nonconformists, as were the early days of James. But again the dispensing power was brought into play; and again it was resisted by the best of the Nonconformists. They knew what it meant. While it suited James to play the part of a tolerant ruler in England, he contrived to get passed through the obsequious Scottish Parliament the brutal, horrible law that "Whoever should preach in a conventicle under a roof, or should attend, as preacher or hearer, a conventicle in the open air, should be punished with death, and the confiscation of his property." We need not inquire into the truth of the terribly pathetic story of the Wigtonshire martyrs, which Lord Macaulay quotes from Woodrow, and which is still more pathetic, if possible, in its original form. Mr. Napier main-

tains that it is a myth, and there is a good deal on both sides to be said. The Nonconformists knew too well the tyrannous temper of James and the cruelty of his heart to trust him, and they would have none of his gifts. The deadly dangers to the Protestant cause and to the Anglican Church led the bishops to express a marvellous tenderness for the Nonconformists. Lloyd, of St. Asaph, writes: "You and we are brethren; we have, indeed, been angry brethren. But we have seen our folly, and are resolved, if ever we have it in our power, to show that we will treat you as brethren." The Dissenters nobly stood by the clergy and the great bulk of the people, holding at that time the balance of power; and when the bishops were committed to the Tower, bitterly as they had suffered at their hands, they visited them in prison, and so fulfilled the law of Christ.

But after the Revolution had triumphed by the help of the Nonconformists all was forgotten. All the influence of William could not secure the repeal of the Test Acts, the Conventicle Act, and the Five-Mile Act. The Acts were retained, but the penalties under the last two were abolished; and a Toleration Act was passed in 1689 which secured fair liberty of worship and prophesying. I say fair, not full, liberty; for Nonconformist ministers, to secure the benefit of the Act, were compelled to profess under their hand their belief in the Articles of the Church of England, except the 34th, 35th, 36th, and part of the 20th. A further relaxation was made to meet the case of the Baptists, and Quakers were allowed to affirm. The word toleration is not used in the Act. It is simply an Act of exemption from penalties under certain conditions. Still, imperfect as it was, an immense step had been gained.

Under Anne there was a strong reaction. In 1703 the Test Act was extended to Ireland. In 1711 the Occasional Conformity Bill was passed. Three times, in 1702, 1703,

and 1704, it had passed the Commons, but had been rejected by the Lords. In 1711, owing to political combinations which we need not stay to describe, it passed both Houses and became law. The Test Act, though effectual against Papists, by no means excluded moderate Nonconformists, who felt no scruple in occasionally attending the worship and conforming to the rites of the Church of England. There were, for instance, many Dissenting Lord Mayors. The Occasional Conformity Bill was aimed at this class, and provided—

“That all persons in places of profit and trust, and all Common Councilmen in Corporations, who, holding office, were proved to have attended any Nonconformist place of worship, should forfeit the place, and should continue incapable of public employment until they should depose that for a whole year they had not attended a conventicle.”

The practice of occasional conformity was an open question among the Dissenters. Defoe was sternly against it; and it is singular that the author of the sketch of Defoe in the series of *English Men of Letters* represents Defoe as breaking with the Dissenters by his protest. He seems singularly ignorant of the feelings and principles of the Dissenters, though chosen to write the life of a leading champion of their cause. The high-principled Nonconformists were with Defoe; and Dr. Calamy informs us that many eminent Dissenters who were in offices of trust were in sore perplexity when the Bill passed as to whether they should not at once throw up their offices, and were only dissuaded by consideration, at that critical time, for the public good. In 1714 the Schism Act was passed, which was intended to extirpate Nonconformist seminaries. It provided that none, under pain of three months' imprisonment, should keep either a public or a private school, or should even act as tutor or usher, unless he had obtained a license from the bishop, had engaged to conform to the Anglican liturgy, and had received the sacrament accord-

ing to the rites of the Church of England within a year. The Act, which had other stringent and indeed atrocious provisions, passed easily; but the Queen died on the day on which it was to become law. It was but slightly operative, though it caused some trouble, and under George I. it was formally repealed. The Occasional Conformity Act shared the same fate, but a measure to repeal the Test Acts had to be dropped. They were destined to stain our Statute Book for another hundred years.

Under Walpole in 1736, and again in 1789, a new attempt was made to repeal the Acts, and failed. But indemnity bills were passed yearly from that time to relieve those who had incurred the penalties, which made the position of the Nonconformists more tolerable, while the pressure remained on the Papists still. Three times under George III. the subject was brought before Parliament—in 1787, 1789, and 1790. In each case the Bill was lost, the last time by a crushing majority of 294 to 105, after a call of the House. Then the subject slumbered, until, in 1828, a Bill for the repeal was carried without a division through both Houses, and received the Royal assent amid general joy. But still the liberty accorded was incomplete, for there was tacked to it, as the result of a compromise, this declaration, without making which none could partake of its benefits:

"I, A. B., do solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare, upon the true faith of a Christian, that I will never exercise any power, authority, or influence which I may possess by virtue of the office of — to injure or weaken the Protestant Church as by law established in England, or to disturb the said Church in the possession of any rights or privileges to which such Church, or the said Bishops and Clergy, are or may be by law entitled."

The declaration soothed the Tories and comforted the Church, so far at least as to ensure the unopposed passage of the Bill. But it remained a blot upon our Statute Book

till the year 1866, when, though the determined persistence of Mr. George Hadfield in bringing it before the House of Commons, it was finally done away with. So far the battle was won. But while the legal establishment of religion exists in England, religious liberty can never be considered complete, however special disabilities may be abolished; and as the completion of religious liberty in England is just as sure as the rising of the sun to-morrow, the Establishment is just as sure to fall.

And now let me glance at the nature and pressure of the forces hostile to liberty against which the battle had to be fought. They were mainly two, and they are combined in the phrase "Church and King," which probably contains as much matter obstructive to liberty as any three words in the world.

1. The Royal Prerogative, having its root in the idea of the divine right of kings; the king as the regent of the King of kings in this lower world, accountable to none for his actions but to God alone. "Do you not know that I am above the law?" said James II. to the young Duke of Somerset, when he refused to introduce the Nuncio, because he was advised that it was illegal. "Your Majesty may be, but I am not," was the reply. The idea of the divine right of the monarch to govern according to his conscience, and to demand implicit obedience from the subject, was formulated by James I., who, if he was the wisest fool in Europe, as Henri Quatre called him, was a very wise fool indeed. He was a man of very shrewd perception, and was able to put his ideas into very pointed forms. "The power of kings," he said, "is like the Divine power; as God can create and destroy, make and unmake at pleasure, so kings can give life and death, judge all, and be judged by none. . . . It is blasphemy to dispute what God might do; so it is sedition in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power." You know how in the

time of King Charles, divines like Sibthorp and Mainwaring echoed back this assumption with slavish adulation, and how the doctrine of passive obedience became the creed of the Anglican Church. It sounds like ludicrous blasphemy now; how could men believe it then? You do not get to the bottom of the matter by simply exposing it. A doctrine which held such sway during a century over some of the most cultivated minds in England, and at critical moments roused the enthusiasm of the whole people, had something real behind it. What was it? I am persuaded that we can only understand this assertion of the divine right of kings, by trying to grasp the tremendous chasm which had been created in the system of men's political ideas and habits by the fall of the Roman Church. Always during the Middle Age there had been what was believed to be a Divine authority in the background; an authority which claimed the right and the power in extreme cases to rule the rulers, and speak with the authority of God on the conduct of secular affairs. That vanished out of the Protestant horizon, and what was to take its place? The Bible, we say. Yes, the Bible was to take the place of the Church. But whose Bible? The Anglican interpretation, the Puritan, the Presbyterian, or the fifth monarchy fanatic's?—for all rested their platform on the Divine Word. Few realize how much fifth monarchy fanaticism not yet formulated, what visions of the kingdom of the saints, were floating about in Protestant England in Elizabeth's, in James's, in Charles's, time. Cartwright, one of the keenest intellects of Elizabeth's day, had a scheme of government drawn, he said, out of the Bible, which would have reduced England to a theocracy ruled by priests. And men were in those days very much at the mercy of their teachers for their interpretation of the Word of God.

The answer, the Bible, is a right one. There is a

Bible which is behind all these party interpretations, at which we shall arrive in time ; but we have not reached it yet. In the early days of the Protestant monarchies the question was a sorely perplexing one, What is to supply to us in political matters a principle of authoritative guidance? how may we know what is the right course amid these conflicting theories and claims? The monarchy was the institution which stood forth most prominently, when all idea of an earthly power behind the monarchy had faded from men's sight. Hobbes had formulated the philosophical principle; and it was natural, inevitable, that the experiment should be tried practically, whether monarchy could fill the gap; so the doctrine of the divine right of kings for a hundred years tried to fill the gap, and miserably failed. A monarch like Elizabeth, acting in concert with her subjects, and instructing herself with their wisdom, filled the gap tolerably well. She talked or thought little about the right, but used, and on the whole nobly, the power. James put it into form as a right, and used it as an instrument of tyranny, and then the sternest and most fruitful struggle in the world's history began. The execution, the righteous and necessary execution, of Charles I., raised in the royalists obedience to idolatry, which touched its culminating point in the early days of Queen Anne. Anne was the granddaughter of "the sainted martyr;" she was the home-born Queen, with the old traditions of the Restoration, after the stern, cold, but righteous rule of the Dutch William, whom the people never really loved. The publication of Clarendon's history fanned the flame of fanatical loyalty; and the cry "Church and King" represented the only religion which the unthinking mass of Englishmen cared to believe. The doctrine of non-resistance was distinctly the doctrine of the Church of England. Even a prelate like Tillotson had, in attending Lord William Russell in his last hours,

distinctly impressed upon him that, unless he accepted the doctrine, he could "feel no confidence in his salvation." Burnet, it is evident—large-minded and liberal Churchman as he was, the Arthur Penrhyn Stanley of his day—was tinged at that time with the same views. The clergy who attended Monmouth impressed on him the same idea. But the fanaticism about King Charles's martyrdom in Anne's reign carried the idea to an extravagant height. But for Anne's common and unenterprising character, and the great war under a Whig General, who was *facile princeps* among the military commanders of his time and among the very foremost of all time, which excited the imagination of the country, the Queen might have turned this enthusiasm into directions profoundly perilous to English liberty. Some specimen of the language of High Churchmen in those days will astonish those who have not looked into it.

Some verses were published soon after the execution of Charles, of which a specimen is quoted by Mr. Lecky in his invaluable history, which is a perfect mine both of fact and truth.

"Kings are gods once removed. It hence appears
No court but Heaven's can try them by their peers.
So that for Charles the Good to have been tried,
And cast by mortal votes, was Deicide."

A still more blasphemous passage is quoted by Mr. Lecky from a poem on the Last Day, by no less a person than the poet Young. The passage is not in the dedication, as Mr. Lecky says, but in the body of the work, in the third Book; nor is Mr. Lecky correct in saying that it was cancelled in subsequent editions; it appears in the second Oxford edition of 1713, and in the London editions of 1715 and 1725, and runs thus:

"But what is he who midst the radiant bands
Of spotless saints, a laurelled martyr stands,
Conspicuous from afar? Whose rays so bright

Sollicit and attract the ravished sight ?
 In whom I see two distant virtues joyned,
 A Royal Greatness and an humble mind.
 His lifted hands his lofty neck surround,
 To hide the scarlet of a circling wound,
 Th' Almighty Judge bends forward from his throne
 Those scars to mark, and then regards his own—
 Jerusalem's foundations groan aloud,
 And Albion sinks beneath her ambient flood."

A curious sermon preached before Charles II. at Breda in 1649, by one of his chaplains, was partly reprinted in 1702 in defence of Dr. Binckes' more outrageous language before the Lower House of Convocation. I quote some passages from each. The Breda chaplain, after dwelling on the Passion, proceeds :

"I am to present to you another sad tragedy so like unto the former, that it may seem but *vetus fabula per novos histriones*, the stage only changed and new actors entered upon it, other princes of this world, yea, of the darkness of this world, far worse than Pilate, the High Priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, who have lately murdered (if not the Lord of glory, yet I am sure) a glorious Lord; not Christ the Lord, but the Lord's Christ, God's anointed. . . . The Person that was now murdered was not the Lord of glory, but a glorious Lord, Christ's own vicar, His lieutenant and vicegerent here upon earth within his dominions. And therefore, by all laws Divine and humane, he was privileged from any punishment which could be inflicted by men. Albeit he was as inferior to Christ as man is unto God. . . . Yet was his privilege of inviolability far more clear than was Christ's. For Christ was not a temporal Prince, His kingdom was not of this world; therefore when He vouchsafed to come into the world and to become the Son of man, He did subject Himself unto the law."

He draws a minute parallel between the circumstances of the two passions :

"At both passions a centurion was converted." "Strange scenes were seen in the sky." "When our Saviour was crucified they parted His garments amongst them, and cast lots for his seamless coat; so having crucified our sovereign, they parted His houses, parks, and kingdoms, and for Ireland they cast lots. . . . In all these things our sovereign was a lively image of our Saviour."

Dr. Binckes pictures the two martyrs with an evident leaning to the conviction that the trial and execution of King Charles was the darkest crime of the two:

"He was not first dressed up in purple robes for an hour or two, and saluted with a 'Hail, king!' but the usual ornaments of royalty were his customary apparel. . . . Our Saviour declaring that His kingdom was not of this world, might look like a renunciation of His temporal sovereignty—but here was an indisputable unrenounced right of sovereignty, both by the laws of God and man. The people crucified Christ upon a principle of loyalty, and out of a misguided zeal, having a notion that He intended to set Himself against Cæsar, and pull down their temple and church. But here was one whose greatest crime was being a king and a friend to the Church. . . . As for the nature of the facts, there was no pretence in our case of freeing our country from usurpation or any unusual form of government; on the contrary, what was done was to establish a usurper on the throne of a lawful prince, and to change an ancient monarchy into a commonwealth. . . . All was carried on in so public a manner as to bid defiance to Heaven itself; what the Jews said to Christ on the cross was not more provoking, or a more direct challenging of Almighty God to save His vicegerent if He could."

I quote these passages that you may see what was behind the despotic idea in those days. Monarchs were fooled to the top of their bent by priests and poets; and the person of the monarch was surrounded with fond idolatry by the clergy and a great proportion of the unthinking mass of the people. Dr. Binckes was censured by the House of Lords; but he was soon after appointed Dean of Lichfield, and was thrice elected by the clergy Prolocutor of Convocation.

The Sacheverell episode is a fair gauge of the strength of this royalist passion. Dr. Sacheverell was really a very common man, and he preached some sermons on public occasions which at any rate are weary reading now; notably one on *The Perils from False Brethren*, which was preached before the Lord Mayor on November 9th, 1709, and was dedicated to him; and this no doubt lent to it a little public importance. He had published previously

some Fast-day and Assize sermons—one of which is said to have helped to produce Defoe's celebrated piece of irony, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, which cost him a taste of the pillory; where he was assailed, not with rotten eggs and refuse, but with demonstrations of popular sympathy and regard. But there was really nothing in them except coarse and furious diatribes against every liberal movement of the time; complaints of decay and prophesies of ruin, such as Her Majesty's Opposition of both parties are wont in these days to indulge in, without disturbing the composure of the Government or the community. But in those days there was much more inflammable material abroad in the air, and what would be harmless now might be easily laden with practical mischief then. The sermon before the Lord Mayor attracted most attention, being preached in the Metropolis before a public body; and the House of Commons resolved to impeach the author before the Lords. It seems to have been a very foolish resolution, even making full allowance for the excited state of the public mind; for the passages incriminated in the articles of impeachment are weak and foolish in the extreme—mere ranting Church-and-King-ism—and might very safely have been left alone to drop into speedy oblivion. But the Commons thought otherwise, and impeached the preacher before the bar of the Lords. The trial did the country one very substantial service. The speeches of the managers were a most masterly exposition and defence of the policy of the Revolution, which Burke long after referred to as the standard justification of the Whig policy of 1688. But while the Commons impeached him, the people magnified him. Prayers were offered for him in most of the churches, and even in the royal chapel, as a man under persecution; Dissenting meeting-houses were assailed, and many of them even wrecked; the troops had to be called

out to disperse the mobs of his sympathizers, and the whole country was convulsed. He was convicted and suspended for three years; but his journeys through the country were like royal progresses; and it is noted that women were specially intense in their enthusiasm. Indeed, it is said to be the first political movement in England in which women took a prominent part. "But indeed," says Defoe, "as soon as you pinch the parson, he holds out his hand to the ladies for assistance, and they appear as one woman in his defence." With the multitude the superstitious notion that the touch of the Lord's anointed was a cure for scrofulous disease, bore strongly in the same direction. Charles II. is said to have touched 100,000 in the course of his life. On one day Louis XIV. touched 1,600 at Versailles. William of Orange was not supposed to possess the power, and did not care to pretend to it. But Anne was of the old line, and the superstition revived. She touched 200 in a single day; and there were those who founded on it a strong argument for adhering to the ancient line.

Here, then, was one strong hostile force which the champions of liberty had to deal with. And it took long to conquer. A tremendous blow was struck at this divine right of kings when William III. was called to the throne. A still more tremendous, and indeed a fatal, blow was struck when the House of Hanover was established on the throne by a Parliamentary title; a king created by Parliament visibly before all the world. The Church was in terrible straits; but as ever she succumbed, and set to work to formulate excuses for her acceptance of a Parliamentary king with what heart she could. But the idea was long in dying. It was George III.'s conviction that his obstinate rather than resolute conscience was the God-appointed arbiter of England's destinies, which cost us that severance of our

colonial empire which God has overruled to be a great blessing; and it entirely forbade in his days any advance in the path of civil and ecclesiastical reform.

The second, and perhaps more formidable force of resistance, was the dogged, senseless, and godless opposition of the Established Church to every measure of progress.

The saddest thing about the principle of Establishment is, that it ranges itself and appears to range Christianity against every political movement which seems to promise benediction to mankind. I say appears to range Christianity, because the great majority of the people naturally and almost necessarily take their impressions about the gospel from those who are set before them by public authority as its ordained expositors and organs. Is there one great step of the progress which has conducted us to our present freedom and prosperity, which has not been resisted to the last gasp by the rulers and the clergy of the Church? No, not to the last gasp. It was William of Orange who said, "There is one way by which I can avoid seeing the ruin of my country; I can die in the last ditch." The hierarchy has mostly stopped short of that. The non-jurors are rare. The clever way by which, at the Revolution and the accession of the House of Brunswick, the clergy reconciled their old theories and their new interests, was watched by the unbelievers with an amazement which was not unmixed with scorn. The oath of abjuration after the death of James and the recognition of the Pretender by France, which compelled them to recognize the existing sovereign as "lawful" and "rightful," tried them severely; as it destroyed the refuge which their consciences had found in the distinction between the *de facto* and the *de jure* king. But they took it nevertheless. "State Churches," as Mr. Lecky says, "though they have many merits, are not schools of heroism." Establishment ranges a heavy dead weight of interest and prejudice on

the side of the existing status, and against every movement towards reform. Then, again, as Fuller quaintly says, "the pulpits of the Established Church in all political changes are made of the same wood as the council board." Rarely indeed do the powers that be find the Established drum-ecclesiastic beating at the head of their foes. Cæsar and Establishment have always been good friends, save at the Revolution, when Cæsar was bent on a course which would have abolished the Establishment altogether; otherwise the Church has mostly found good reasons for the worst tyrannies which Cæsar has exercised upon mankind.

And I believe solemnly that this has been a main cause of that hostility of the masses to Christianity which we all deplore. It has fixed the idea in the heart of the people that the religion of Christ has been, and is, an obstructive force in the way of progress, and must be thrust out of the pathway of reform. This and the terrible tithe system are, I believe, mainly responsible for much of the bitterness of modern unbelief. I say the terrible tithe system. Few of us have any conception of the working of the system before the Tithe Commutation Acts withdrew its worst feature from the public gaze. I say deliberately that if those Acts had not been passed, if the tithe system were worked still as it was worked in the eighteenth century, the Establishment would have withered long ago under the indignation of mankind. Readers of George Fox's journal will remember how fiercely he denounces the system. His denunciations were wrung from him by what he constantly witnessed in parishes, in which, as he says, the people never see their shepherd but when he comes to fleece them; and by the scenes of wrangling, wrath, and hate of which the tithing was prolific. As to its work in Ireland, we should have to use stronger words.

It may be said that the tithe is a Divine institution, and rests on the Divine law. Yes, just as righteousness, mercy, and charity rest on the Divine law. God ordained the tithe and left it to the good-will of the people. There is no trace in the Old Testament of any formal process for its legal recovery. No sacred book was ever seized by the strong hand of the law and sold to support the Jewish priesthood; nor was any Jew ever debarred from a new and profitable cultivation of his land by dread of the exactions of his priest. This ranging of the forces of the law on the side of what are called "the legal rights of the Establishment" has been in all ages a needless and terrible aggravation of the difficulty, with which the pure and lofty doctrine of the gospel wins its way to the heart and the conscience of mankind.

Grotius says, "*Qui historiam Ecclesiasticam legit, nihil legit præter vitia Episcoporum*;" and Grotius was a man well read in history. But this is quite too trenchant a sentence to be wholly true. Some of the noblest men that have ever lived have been bishops; but, alas! the whole influence of the order has, without question, been strenuous in the maintenance of abuses and resistance to reform. In Ireland perhaps episcopacy showed its least beautiful aspect, though men like Bedell even there were not rare. Of the Irish bishops of his time Swift thus writes with scathing sarcasm:

"Excellent and moral men have been selected on every occasion of vacancy. But it unfortunately has uniformly happened that, as these worthy divines crossed Hounslow Heath on their way to Ireland, they have been regularly robbed and murdered by the highwaymen frequenting that common, who seized upon their robes and patents, came over to Ireland, and got consecrated bishops in their stead."

This is from a bigoted Churchman, who hated Dissent like poison, but who loved Ireland and wept tears of blood over her miseries. It takes more than a generation of bene-

ficent legislation and rule to efface the memory of such wrongs as that, which cover Church, Bible, and Gospel with shame. It would be hard to exaggerate the truculent bigotry, the blank contempt of everything Christian, which animated the Establishment of the Restoration, the Revolution, and the Georgian era; the wonder is that the faintest spark of faith was kept alive in the land. That Christianity lived through it is due under God mainly to the Nonconformists. Indeed, what Christ has endured in all ages at the hands of His professed disciples is one of the darkest chapters of human history.

The ship in which John Hawkins opened the slave-trade was called the *Jesus*. There is a brutal passage in Swift's works, to which I have lost the reference and cannot quote *verbatim*, in which he speaks of the Churchmen as the children, and the Dissenters as something like the dogs in the State, who ought to think themselves happy if they pick up the crumbs from under the children's table. These are not the words, but they express the spirit of the passage; and I think that no student of the eighteenth century can deny that this was the spirit which reigned in the temper and attitude of the Georgian Church. Burnet in the earlier years of the century, as you have heard, and Hoadly later, made strenuous battle for liberty. Very early in the century, in 1704, when the Bill against occasional conformity was sent up to the Lords, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Tenison, made an earnest protest against it. I quote a few sentences from his speech:

"The employing of persons of a different religion from the established has been practised in all countries where liberty of conscience has been allowed. We have gone further already, in excluding Dissenters, than any other country has done."

"Whatever reasons there were to apprehend our religion in danger from the Papists when the Test Act was made, yet there does not seem the least danger to it from the Dissenters now; on the other hand, I

can see very plain inconveniences from this Bill at present. . . . At a time when all Europe is engaged in a bloody and expensive war ; that this nation has not only such considerable foreign enemies to deal with, but has a party in her own bowels ready upon all occasions to bring in a Popish Pretender ; . . . at a time when the Protestant Dissenters (however they may be in the wrong in separating from us, yet) are heartily united with us against the common foes of our religion and government ;—what advantage those who are in earnest in defending these things can have by lessening the number of such as are firmly united in this common cause, I cannot for my life imagine. Therefore I am for throwing out the Bill, without giving it another reading."

Again, Shipley, of St. Asaph, in the debate of 1779, puts it thus very pertinently : " All history is full of the mischiefs occasioned by the want of toleration. One might naturally ask a minister for a good pension, or a good contract, but hardly any one would think of making interest with him for a place in heaven." But this liberal element was absolutely powerless to tame or even to moderate the bigotry. In 1784, Walpole, whose splendid service to this country as a peace minister and a financier is gaining fuller recognition, was urged to repeal the Test Acts. He gladly acknowledged the obligation of the Crown to the Dissenters, but he said plainly that he " dreaded to hear the cry, ' The Church is in danger,' it might even endanger the Protestant succession." But from that time a yearly Indemnity Bill was passed for those who violated the Acts, and so the practical grievance was somewhat mitigated. But it was nearly a hundred years from Walpole's time before the Church could be induced to agree to their repeal.

It was strange that the Church should exert such an influence on society ; so loaded with abuse was its system, and so low were the manners and morals of its priests. A disgraceful letter of no less a man than Middleton is quoted by Mr. Lecky, whom nothing escapes.

" The slumberers in stalls " (he says) " suspect one very unjustly of ill designs against the peace ; for though there are many things in the

Church that I wholly dislike, yet whilst I am content to acquiesce in the ill, I should be glad to taste a little of the good, and to have some amends for that ugly assent and consent which no man of sense can approve of. We read of some of the earliest disciples of Christ who followed Him not for His works but for His loaves. These are certainly blameable, because they saw His miracles; but to us, who had not the happiness to see the one, it may be allowable to have some inclination to the other."

This letter throws a dreary light upon the era. But superstition was rampant in the decay of faith. The people and the squires were grossly ignorant, and the clergy had knowledge at any rate. There was a strong reaction, too, at the beginning of the century against the profligacy and blasphemy of the era of the Restoration; while Anne was simply an idolater of the Church of England. The Establishment was to her very much what the Church of Rome had been to her father, and filled the same place in her system. There can be little question that, but for the strong hand and brain of the Whig nobility of her time, the brutal tyranny of the Laudean Church might easily have been restored.

The doctrine which was then propounded by the Church zealots has probably in point of impious pretension never been surpassed. It was maintained that "repentance was useless unless followed by absolution, administered by an Episcopalian priest." "He who does not believe in the apostolical succession is an atheist." "There is no communicating with the Father and the Son but by communion with the Bishops." Even the immortality of the soul was made dependent on Episcopal intervention. Our souls, thinks Dodwell, in curious anticipation of a dreary doctrine which is making some havoc among us in our day—and Dodwell was no intemperate, illiterate curate, but a learned and able man, held in very high repute—are naturally mortal, but they are made immortal by baptism by an Episcopal clergyman. Pagan and unbaptized infants

cease to exist at death ; but Dissenters are specially kept alive after death that they may be eternally damned.

Here, then, were two fierce and implacable foes of the liberty of the subject ; they interlaced and supported each other, the Church being on the whole the most determined despot of the two. Against these the battle had to be fought through the whole of the eighteenth century by the great party of progress—Whigs, Freethinkers, and Dissenters ; but the energy, the courage, and the victorious force of the party were mainly supplied by the Nonconformists. The spirit of the despot has been exorcised from the State entirely. Alas ! though there has been a glorious progress, the spirit of the bigot has not been exorcised from the Church. The old bat-blind bigotry has had many a field day in our times. It was just the old Laudean and Georgian fury against liberty and progress which brought the clergy flocking in troops to Oxford, to expel the greatest and most Christian minister of the century from the representation of the oldest and noblest University in the land.

And now let us survey the forces which were arrayed on the side of progress ; which pressed the array of bigotry and despotism with stern, constant, and courageous persistence, and which won at last the glorious and final victory.

One thing it is very important that we should note, as it bears on the whole struggle—the intense dislike of the English people to anything like a standing army, which Cromwell's military government had bequeathed. That resource of despotism was cut off. It was long before Parliament would build barracks for the troops. Charles's and James's guards were billeted on the people. The army, as little by little it inevitably grew, suffered miserably from the unwillingness of Parliament to provide it a nest, where it might grow into an instrument of tyranny.

Parliament spent all its interest on the militia. As late as 1760 Lord Bath writes bitterly to complain of the growth of the army, and that the nobles solicited the badge of military subjection by becoming officers; and he adds that the erection of barracks may be "now proposed safely by ministers, whereas twenty years before it would have ruined them." Even to this day we only enact the Mutiny Act for a year; so that the despotic principle in England has had to fight in its own strength alone.

A second feature of the age which must be borne in mind was its enormous intellectual activity, and most notably in the social and political spheres. The number of political newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets was immense; and many of them were written by the ablest men of the day. Eighty thousand copies of Defoe's *True-born Englishman* are said to have been sold in London alone. Forty thousand of Sacheverell's sermon were sold in a few days, and sixty thousand of its antidote. The *Spectator* attained at last a daily circulation of fourteen thousand. Now learning may be a very good ally to bigotry—witness the hierarchy of the Church of England, where learning has never been rare. But the stir and free play of thought must in the end be fatal to it. In the light of knowledge, bigotry and despotism must in the end inevitably wither away. Moreover, Locke's noble treatises on Toleration, and on the principles of government, had marked out with the hand of a master the line of progress. They had been followed by a multitude of writings which pursued and illustrated his line of thought. Pope, the intellectual autocrat of his time, had written the stinging line:

"The right divine of kings to govern wrong."

Cowper, later in the century, had described the sacramental test in these scathing words:

“ And made the symbols of atoning grace
An office key—a picklock to a place,
That infidels may make their title good
By an oath dipped in sacramental blood.”

And these are but well-known specimens of the winged words which were flying about in the air through that whole eighteenth century, and which were as arrows in the heart of the great enemies of Christ's kingdom, the bigotry of priests and the tyranny of princes. The intellectual life of the eighteenth century, with Hume for its philosopher, Johnson for its man of letters, and Gibbon for its historian, was wonderfully full and active; and quite the most powerful influence was on the sceptical side. But the controversies of the century kept men's minds on the stretch and on the move, and pressed very heavily against the bigoted traditions which ruled in Church and State. Altogether the most important of these controversies was that on Deism, which produced a deep influence, not on England only, but on France, and did much to give form and direction to that great movement which at the end of the century laid both Church and Throne in the dust, and brought in an altogether new era in the history of the world. The Deism was fundamentally a revolt against an unreasonable orthodoxy. The Deistical writers on the whole were not men of great mark, and their constructive system was a miserable abortion. The religion of Nature which they would substitute for Christianity had no brain or heart in it. The great theologians of the day knocked their arguments to pieces. Mr. John Stuart Mill being witness, the Deists had no chance against the doctors; the victory as against any scheme of Deism as a rival to Christianity was complete all along the line. And yet we do not know yet what we owe to the Deists. There are two works which strike the key-note of all that is best in the Deistical writings—*Christianity not Mysterious*, by

Toland ; *Christianity as old as the Creation*, by Tindal. The reasoning of these books was simply shattered by their opponents ; their system was torn to tatters. But yet there was something in it which could not be shattered, which was rooted in truth, and which has got itself worked into our present idea of Christianity. Men could no longer accept the leading idea of the Puritan theology, that the whole system of things attended the fortunes of a limited elect community, for whose salvation a system of miraculous intervention had been devised, in suspension of the ordinary laws of the universe, and resting on the decrees of the sovereignty of God. Men were beginning to feel after the higher truth—that Christianity, if it was the complete fruit of Divine self-revelation, must be in essential harmony with the principles of God's universal government ; must have been contemplated in the scheme on which the Creator made the worlds ; and must be a system of spiritual government for the whole human race. Similarly about miracles, men were working towards the idea that miracle is no contravention but a revelation of the true order of the Creation ; and that the mysterious and supernatural element in Christianity was the visible index to the great natural processes which maintain the order of the Cosmos and fulfil the thought of God in the ever-increasing progress of the world. These ideas were behind much of the Deistical argument, and the controversies of the times gradually wrought them, or rather the germs of them, into the creed of the Church.

There was a vast enlargement in those days of man's conception of the Creation, its magnitude, its complexity, and its subjection through its whole realm to serene, constant, and impassive law ; and a new and larger conception of the kingdom of God, its nature, constitution, and method of rule, was inevitable. We little estimate what influence such vast discoveries as those of Copernicus

and Newton—or rather discernments of the true order of the Creation—exercised on man's thoughts about life, about human society; and about the kingdom of heaven. The eighteenth century was in travail with a new conception of the order of human things, in tune with the larger, freer, and more majestic conception of the order of Nature which had taken possession of the intellect of the time. The Deistical controversy was one of the groans of the travail, and those who have not studied it closely would be surprised to discover how many buried Christian ideas it exhumed, and brought forth to the light of day.

But the great matter as regards public liberty in this Deistical controversy was, in the first place, the reason which was brought fearlessly to bear on all things on earth and in heaven; and next, the study of the rights of man and the constitution of society which it generated. Those familiar with it will know that very much of it turned on the question of the influence of this or that creed on the good of society. This led to closer consideration of the nature of society, and of the natural rights of the members of society. Men like Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau confess their indebtedness to the champions in this English controversy, for that grasp of the natural rights of man and the sacredness of human liberty which developed into the Revolution; while the study of science, and the enlargement of human thought which it secured, that habit of searching out fact, and that reverence for truth which is one of the noblest attributes of science, wrought mightily in the same direction, as a solvent of traditional bigotries and tyrannies, and as a proclamation that a new era of enlightenment and liberty was at hand.

The next influence which helped forward mightily the cause of liberty which I shall mention, was purely political—the noble and patriotic conduct of the great Whig party, whose strength lay in the House of Peers. I have

already shown how the unity of the English nation was developed, and how noble and peasant came to have a strong common bond. It was the Norman nobles with a great archbishop at their head, who wrung from the tyrannous John the charter which secured that "no freeman shall be seized, or imprisoned, or dispossessed, or outlawed, or in any way brought to ruin. We will not go against any man nor send against him, save by legal judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land." In the Caroline and Georgian eras the Lords were constantly far in advance of the Commons in their care for the public liberties. To the Tory squires the toast "Church and King" summed up their political creed. The Lords were, as a rule, more cultivated, more touched with the philosophic spirit of the time, more able to measure the tendencies of the age, and to appreciate the worth of the Dissenters to the State. When the Dissenters were in a measure silenced under Charles, an influential body of Peers and the best of the squirearchy took up their cause and became their mouthpieces. The part which the Peers played in the Revolution of 1688, and in the transference of the Crown to the House of Brunswick, I need not dwell upon. Under Anne the Lords thrice—in 1702, 1703, and 1704—threw out the Bill against occasional conformity, which had thrice been sent up by the Commons; and if they passed it at last it was only after a general election had shown that the opinion of the country was overwhelmingly on its side. When the Test Act was repealed at last, it was a member of the noble house of Russell who led the Whigs to the crowning victory. At the passing of the Reform Bill, a large majority of the Peers of an older creation than George III. was on the popular side. And we must remember that the heir of one of the noblest and wealthiest ducal families in the country stood shoulder to shoulder with Mr. Gladstone in forcing through that great Land Act, which the

blind and selfish Tory croakers assure us will lay the honour and the influence of his order in the dust. While the House of Lords of to-day, full of new men, is content to follow a base tradition and to challenge an outbreak of popular indignation, never let us forget what a deep debt throughout the long, stern struggle, the liberty of England owes to her Peers.

But altogether the strongest force which was brought to bear upon the issue of the struggle—the decisive force—was the growing strength, wealth, culture, and influence of the Protestant Dissenters.

It is a pet theory of Broad Churchmen that the expulsion of the Nonconformists in 1662 was an act disastrous alike to the Church and to the religious life of the community; that had they been retained the Church would have been a far stronger spiritual force in the country, breadth of theological thought would have been secured, bitter controversies would have been nipped in the bud, and all would have “gone merry as a marriage bell” in the Christian state. It is an utter delusion. The Church of England never did a worse day’s work for herself, or a better day’s work for England, than when she turned out the Nonconformists. It threw the purest spiritual life of the community on what Dr. Begg calls “the sinful,” but what I call “the divine,” voluntary principle; it kept it free, not from the trammels only, but from the deadening influence of the State Establishment; it formed a powerful Christian body, full of religious zeal and love, which has been the backbone of the party of progress for two hundred years; and it has lent that dignity, that loftiness of aim and motive, that high morality, and that resolute purpose, which religion can lend to political movements, to our English struggle for ecclesiastical, civil, and civic reform. We owe it to black St. Bartholomew’s day that at the heart of the struggle there has been a religious duty; and

that is altogether the greatest blessing which the Establishment principle has ever bestowed on our land.

During the Georgian era the Dissenters steadily advanced in numbers, wealth, and influence. It was said in 1701 that Sir Thomas Abney, the Lord Mayor, by his bold conduct in the matter of the Succession Bill, so strengthened the good cause, that the saying went about that the house of Hanover owed its election to a Protestant Dissenter. The ejected Nonconformists, by their holy living, their cheerful poverty, their burning zeal, their learning and pulpit power, laid a strong hold on all that was best in the middle class in England, and had large and growing influence on the upper and even the noble classes. When the elder Calamy was confined in Newgate for preaching in his old parish, the string of carriages of his friends was so great that the Ministry were compelled to release him. And they kept alive in a dark time some spark of religion in the national heart. How dark the time was we have ample evidence. Hume declared that "England had settled into the most cool indifference, with regard to religious matters, that is to be found in any nation in the world." Montesquieu declares that there was no religion in England, and that not more than four or five members of the House were regular attendants at church; and he jokingly remarks that in France he was thought to have too little religion, but in England he was thought to have too much. Concurrently with this there was a fearful decay of public spirit. Religion was looked upon as a valuable adjunct to the police force—no more; the public service was given over to corruption; Walpole said of a group of members, All these men have their price; and public spirit was dead. In 1745 Horace Walpole writes: "If the Pretender arrives, the people may look on and cry, 'Fight dog! fight bear!' if they do no worse." "England," writes Henry Fox, "is for the first comer. The

French are not come, thank God ; but if five thousand had landed in any part of this island a week ago, I verily believe the entire conquest of it would not have cost them a battle." With the Dissenters only there was anything like enthusiasm for the Protestant cause, because there was still alive in their hearts the love of Divine truth. "The Dissenters," says Burnet, "have a much larger share of knowledge among them than those who come to our churches." He expressed his surprise at it. We perhaps can understand it better. The truth is that learning was very highly regarded by the Nonconformists. Their divines held their own with the ablest theologians of the Church. In the Deistical controversy they probably won the chief honours. Their seminaries, which they had to carry on almost by stealth, sent out some distinguished scholars, among whom Archbishop Secker and Bishop Butler may be mentioned, who were partially educated at Tewkesbury. Readers of Doddridge's letters will remember that he writes to Lord Halifax that at a diocesan visitation at Northampton, Chancellor Reynolds said that he was informed "that a fellow taught a grammar-school in the parish without a license, and he bade the churchwardens present him for prosecution." That fellow was Philip Doddridge. He writes about it to Lord Halifax as to a personal friend, and the persecution was stopped by express command of the king. But there can be no doubt that about the middle of the century there was a terrible decay in England both of public spirit and of religious life. Then came the great revival—such an upstirring and uplifting of the ignorant and brutal masses of the people by the preaching of the gospel as the world had rarely witnessed. Verily "the poor had the gospel preached unto them." The dangerous classes in a society such as that of the eighteenth century, who were despised and neglected by the philosophers in France, were laid hold of

in England by the hand of God's mercy and love. Again, as in apostolic days, was laid deep down in the lowest stratum of society the foundation of that restoration of the dignity and nobleness of its life, which in this nineteenth century has made all things new in our world. And as the movement spread, as colliers, pitmen, nailers, soldiers, sailors, and city mobs were brought in some substantial measure under the power of the gospel, as they began to believe that God had visited them, and felt their hearts swell with a great hope for themselves and for mankind, the spirit of the nation revived. There was a stirring among the dry bones everywhere. The splendid and inspiring genius of the elder Pitt, who boasted that he was a man of the people, and that he had his commission from the people, shook the nation from its lethargy, stirred it like the blast of a trumpet, and fanned its slumbering fire. The new-born spirit of the people broke forth in a succession of brilliant military and naval achievements, which for half a century strained the energy of the nation to the utmost, and kindled its enthusiasm; till at the end of the great war it left England the unquestioned mistress of the ocean, the queen of a universal empire, and the manifest leader of the commerce and progress of the world. But all the greatest movements begin in the spiritual sphere. The relation of Pitt to the great evangelists is closer than appears. If they had not first stirred the spirit of the mass of the people, the statesman had thundered forth his glorious eloquence in vain.

That spiritual movement began in the Church of England. But it soon became evident that the old bottles of Establishment could not contain the new wine of the Spirit which was fermenting in those evangelists' hearts. The Church did not cast them out—the Church of those days had not strength enough to cast out anything—but it could not make room for them. Butler thought the

new doctrines "horrid, very horrid;" the evangelists were compelled to make a new exodus. The Nonconformists, though they were not all of the same mind about the new movement, gained by it immensely. They first felt the breath of its inspiration. They threw themselves with new zeal into the proclamation of the gospel. Their congregations multiplied; the poor pressed into them; some classes of the population, and those the most dangerous, were wholly devoted to them; and as they grew mightily in numbers, in social influence, and in hold on the great mass of the people in a great era of political fermentation, it was inevitable that they should demand, with a voice which could no longer be withstood, their political liberties. For, by a law which still stood unrepealed on the Statute Book, the men who were saving the country from revolution, and who in a time of public peril furnished two hundred thousand volunteers, could not serve her in any civil capacity, could not even fight for her, without the loss of their whole civil estate.

But the decisive influence after all was the growing wealth and culture of the Nonconformists through their success in trade. The Nonconformists were the true heirs of the old Anglo-Saxon belief in the dignity of trade. Traders were placed by Alfred among the honourable of the earth. We read of "Barons of London" in Henry II.'s days. Elizabeth had large ventures in the daring commercial enterprizes of her subjects; and great merchants have always had their full honour in the English State. I hold commerce to be fundamentally one of the most Christian occupations of mankind. Civilization is simply the development of the mutual relations and ministries of men, and commerce is its chief handmaid. Commerce implies maritime adventure, and an old Greek dictum asserts that seafaring peoples are always hardy, intelligent, and free. Trade gravitates inevitably to the strongest

and freest peoples. After the Reformation it was reckoned that the Protestant countries carried on three-fourths of the commerce of the world. And there is a curious connection between Nonconformity and commerce everywhere. Partly because the Nonconformists of a country are debarred from public employments; partly because the intelligence and freedom of thought and action which make them Nonconformists make the industry and energy of trade a delight; and partly because they belong largely to that great middle-class to whom trade is the natural calling, Nonconformists have always been distinguished in the annals of commerce. It is reckoned that France expelled a quarter of a million of her most industrious and skilful children when she took to stifling her Nonconformity; most of them brought their arts and industries to England, and greatly enriched our national life. And the thrift, diligence, and integrity which religion fosters tend to make trade a success. The difficulty is for a Quaker in trade to keep poor. In the eighteenth century the Nonconformists were among our most successful traders; and of the rapidly increasing wealth of the country they had their full share. We are told that bankruptcy in a Dissenter was then almost unknown. As they grew cultivated they forced themselves into a prominent rank in the State. Some of the most celebrated Lord Mayors during that century were Dissenters. Moreover, lords and squires have a covetous eye for the money bags of a rich city heiress. Marriages between rich Dissenting maidens and the noblest in the land were not rare. And so before the end of the century it was felt everywhere, save in the Church and by the Tories, that for shame the full emancipation of this powerful, wealthy, and influential class could no longer be delayed. It was noted, too, that the French Revolution had spread among the people very intelligent views of civil and religious liberty; while in

the very highest class, in 1802, the Duke of York, Commander-in-chief, issued an order, "that no soldier should be compelled to attend a mode of worship which he did not approve, or hindered from attending one which he did."

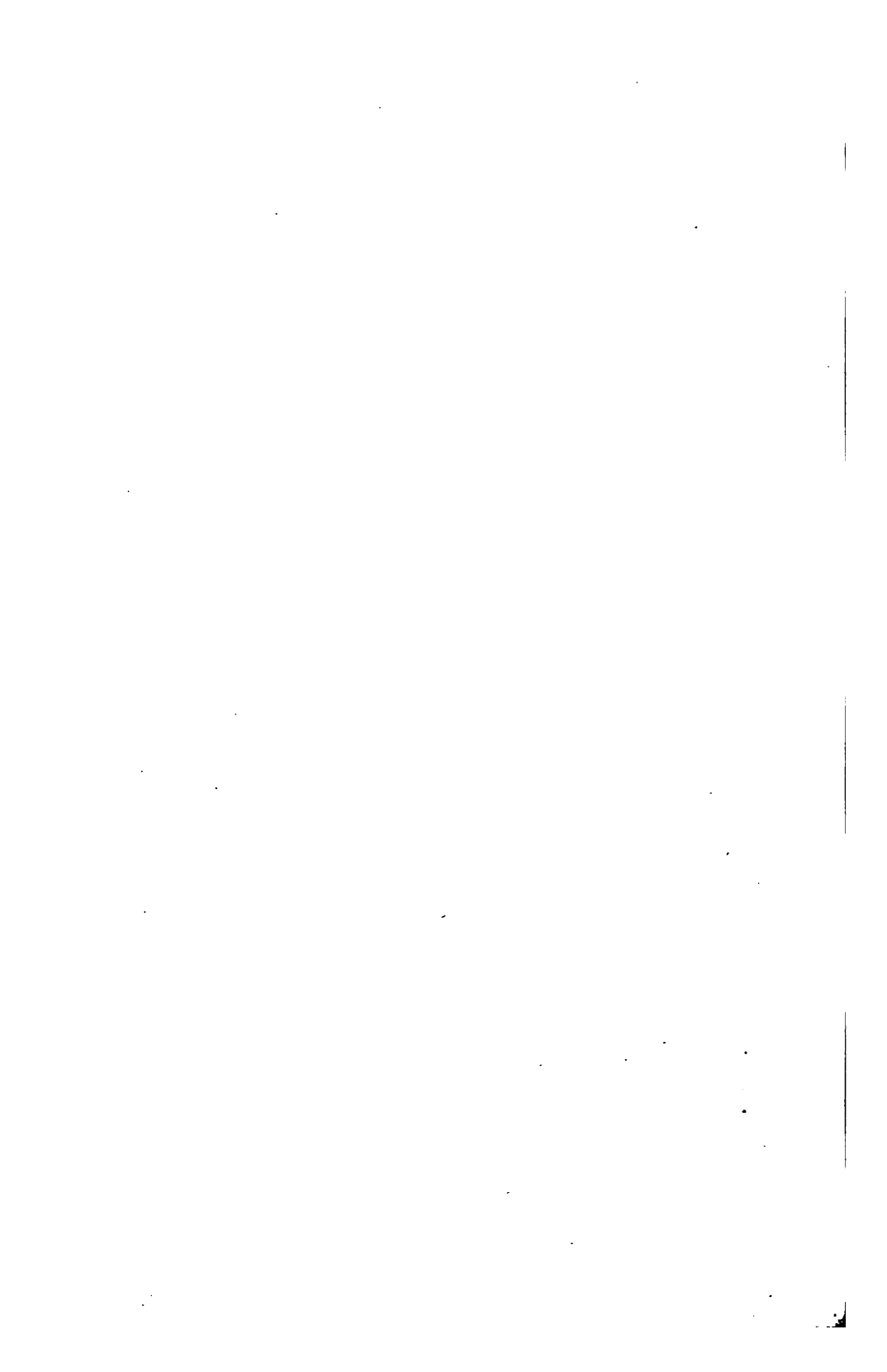
In the last years of the century it was resolved that a determined effort should be made to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts. In 1787 a motion was submitted to the House by a Churchman, who in manly and powerful language denounced the policy of the Test, which he described as "a monstrous attempt to strengthen the Church of England by the debasement of the Church of Christ." Lord North, the Minister, in reply, regarded the Acts as "the corner-stone of the Constitution," and asserted that "the clergy were alarmed by the proposal, and were determined to resist it with their greatest strength." The motion was lost by 178 to 100. In 1789 it was again brought forward, when the motion was lost by 124 to 104. In 1790 Mr. Fox took up the question, and Mr. Pitt moved the call of the House. Every influence was brought to bear by the Church and the Government. George III. threw all his weight into the scale against it, writing to Mr. Pitt, that a sense of religious, as well as political, duty prevented him from discussing any proposition tending to destroy the groundwork of our happy Constitution. Mr. Pitt "feared that if the Acts were repealed, the Dissenters might demand exemption from church-rates," which filled him with horror. The motion was defeated by 294 to 105. Then the question slumbered for nearly forty years. The nation had upon its hands during most of those years a tremendous war, and domestic questions were overshadowed by the peril of the country and of the whole continent of Europe; while the Evangelical Revival actually hindered the repeal, through the intense antagonism of the Evangelists to the Catholics.

But party spirit might as well hope to resist the swelling of the tide as the concession of civil liberties to the Catholics and the Nonconformists. The Irish soldiers had fought our battles with brilliant courage in the Peninsula and at Waterloo; the Nonconformists furnished two hundred thousand volunteers, every one of whom had made himself liable to the penalties of the law, and could only be absolved from them by an Act of Indemnity. The condition of Ireland was becoming yearly more menacing; and the mind of the nation was fully convinced that the concession of the claims of those who suffered social and political disabilities on the ground of religion, could no longer be delayed without peril of civil war.

In 1828 Lord John Russell submitted the final motion for repeal. The debate was keen and brilliant, but substantially there was no opposition. The Bill was passed in the Commons without a division. In the Lords, Lord Eldon led the resistance, insisting that it was the most important revolutionary measure ever brought before the House, which he repeated again and again. But even he was overmastered by the gravity of the crisis and the excitement of the country. Petitions in favour of the measure, he complained, poured in by thousands, while those on the other side were not twenty. The Episcopal bench had woken up at last to recognize, as the Archbishop of York said, that the Acts had "led to the profanation of the most sacred ordinances of religion." The opponents of the Bill in the Lords did not dare to divide against it on the last reading, and so by an unopposed vote this ancient bulwark of bigotry and tyranny was shattered, and the Acts vanished from our Statute Book amid general joy. A great dinner was held at Freemasons' Hall on June 18, 1828, to celebrate the repeal. The Duke of Sussex was in the chair, and expressed himself with a manly vigour on the subject, which added to his already very high reputation and

influence with the Liberal party and the great body of the people. The victory was now substantially, but not formally, complete, even as regards the Nonconformists. A miserable declaration was still imposed on those whom the Act relieved, to comfort the Church and to conciliate the Tories, which I have already recited. It was not until the year 1866, as I have said, that this portion of the Act was repealed, through the persistent efforts of Mr. George Hadfield, and the last wreck of these civil disabilities was expunged from our Statute Book for ever.

This is a bald, brief outline of one of the noblest political struggles, perhaps the very noblest, recorded in history. Resistless as the swing of the planets and the sweep of the tides is the progress of liberty among a people who mean to be free. In England something still remains to be accomplished. But with all our drawbacks I hold that English liberty, as compared with American or French liberty, is the freest in the world. But the last blow has to be struck, the final triumph has to be won. While the establishment of religion by law exists English liberty can never be complete. And as I am convinced that the completion of English liberty is as sure as the great processes of the Creation, I know that the Church, as an Establishment must fall—fall to rise again with new strength and new ministries of benediction to the people. I see its doom as a creature of the law in the full tide of free thought and free action which is swelling and dashing around it. The forces which have won the victory thus far are destined to lay its unblessed supremacy in ruins. And then liberty, equality, and fraternity may come at length to be inscribed by Christ's own hand over the portals of that temple of freedom, which the toils, the tears, and the blood of a hundred generations have reared to His praise.



VIII.

*THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL IN THE
GEORGIAN ERA, AND ITS EFFECT
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
FREE CHURCH PRINCIPLE.*

BY

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VIII.

THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL IN THE GEORGIAN ERA, AND ITS EFFECT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FREE CHURCH PRINCIPLE.

THE Jubilee Year of the Congregational Union of England and Wales is also, by a happy coincidence, the year of the first Œcumenical Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Churches. Under any circumstances we could not have spoken of the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century without a cordial greeting to these Churches, and a sympathetic reference to their work; the statistics furnished to the Conference enable us to estimate the magnitude of the results they have already achieved. Dr. Edwards* calculates that of the Methodist Churches in Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, France, the United States, and Canada represented at the Conference, the membership amounts to 4,999,541, and that the children in their schools are 4,803,012. The relation between Methodist membership and Methodist population has been variously estimated: some would multiply the communicants by two and a half to get the number of adherents; others would multiply them by four or five. Fourteen millions, seventeen millions, twenty-three mil-

* These statistics, slightly differing from those presented to the Conference, are extracted from the *Proceedings of the Conference*, p. 61. (London, 1881.)

lions, twenty-five millions are the results, according to the ratios adopted and the checks applied. To understand these figures we must compare them with some others. The kingdom of Prussia had, in 1871, a population of 24,698,066; the empire of Austria, in 1874, a population of 21,169,841. Italy, in 1861, numbered rather more than 25,000,000; and Spain, in 1867, between sixteen and seventeen millions. England and Wales, in 1861, had a population of 20,066,224; the present population of England alone is 24,608,891. If we leave out of the calculation the French Methodists, whose membership is 1,884, we have this result—that Methodism contributes to the Church of Christ an English-speaking population equal to that of one of the first class European states. At Wesley's death the membership of the societies was 189,549, representing a Methodist population of from 850,000 to half a million. The present population of Birmingham is 400,757; of Leeds, 309,126; the county of Norfolk numbers 444,825; the county of Leicester, 321,078 souls. That is to say—in the fifty years of Wesley's personal ministry, there were brought into ecclesiastical fellowship with him a population equal to a medium English county, or one of the large English towns; in the ninety years that have since elapsed the town or county has grown into a nation.

The significance of these statistics requires a little further consideration. Wesleyan Methodism has seen five generations of human beings; children have been born into it; family traditions have gathered round it; instead of the simple biographies which formed its earliest records it has now a history, exhibiting a continuous type of doctrine and polity, revealing its power of development and of adaptation to various social and political conditions. It lives and thrives in the kingdom of England, in the British colonies, and the American republic; it has extended

itself equally among Anglo-Saxon freemen and the enslaved African population of the Southern States. It has produced and trained its own ministry; it liberally sustains and wisely directs its varied religious and educational institutions; its missions among the heathen can compare in numbers and in moral influence with those of other Protestant Churches; its children have taken their place in every department of public life—legislative, administrative, and philanthropic—and have added their contributions to the intellectual life of England and America. It has had its ecclesiastical controversies; communities have divided from the parent stock, bearing unmistakeably the Methodist type, but claiming freedom to develop the type in ways of their own. It has influenced and been influenced by other Christian communities; it has given proselytes in very large numbers to the Episcopal and Nonconformist Churches; from them, too, it has received proselytes, though probably not in equal proportions, the increase in its numbers having always consisted mainly of those whom it has reclaimed from degradation, ignorance, and vice. It has rightly taken to itself the name of "Church;" it has formulated an ecclesiastical polity, equally worthy of study, and equally subject to criticism, with the polity of any of the historic churches.

No such simple record can be given of the course of Calvinistic Methodism. Whitefield held himself sublimely aloof from the formation and rule of societies, which might represent and perpetuate the fruit of his labours; and the Countess of Huntingdon was prevented, by her sex, if by no other cause, from inaugurating a firmly compacted and an abiding ecclesiastical polity. It was not in Whitefield, as it was in Wesley, to be the centre and radiating force of a system of religious communities, nor was this his vocation; he was a benignant meteor, a "spirit of health," bringing with him "airs from heaven." Two small com-

munities—the New Association of General Baptists in England, and the Free-will Baptists of America—the aggregate membership of which is under 100,000, derive their origin from Whitefield's preaching; and both these communities repudiated, from their formation, the doctrinal system which he acknowledged. In Wales, the Calvinistic Methodists, the most influential Church in the Principality, have recently allied themselves to the English Presbyterians, and call themselves the Welsh Presbyterian Church. In England they have become more and more Congregational. The force of Calvinistic Methodism has been, however, by no means lost, because it is to be sought in the revived spirit and activity of existing communities, and not in a new denomination. The "Evangelical Succession" of the Established Church was largely its offspring; the great increase of Dissenting Churches in the latter half of the eighteenth century was its immediate result.

"The Methodists themselves" (says Mr. Green *) "were the least result of the Methodist revival. Its action upon the Church broke the lethargy of the clergy; and the 'Evangelical' movement, which found representatives like Newton and Cecil within the pale of the Establishment, made the fox-hunting parson and the absentee rector at last impossible. In Walpole's day the English clergy were the idlest and the most lifeless in the world. In our own day no body of religious ministers surpasses them in piety, in philanthropic energy, or in popular regard. In the nation at large appeared a new moral enthusiasm, which, rigid and pedantic as it often seemed, was still healthy in its social tone, and whose power was seen in the disappearance of the profligacy which had disgraced the upper classes, and the foulness which had infested literature ever since the Restoration. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade, and gave the first impulse to popular education."

In all these results Calvinistic Methodism has been as potent an influence as Wesleyanism; in the revival of the

* *History of the English People*, vol. iv. p. 149.

historic Churches and in philanthropic legislation its agency has been the more important. When the bitter waters of Marah were to be sweetened, the Lord shewed Moses a tree, "which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." When Elisha was told of the water which was naught and the barren ground, he called for salt. "And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land." The law-giver and the prophet are both the called of God; a spiritual savour is as Divine and as efficacious as an organised form.

The distinctive feature of Methodist preaching, Calvinistic and Arminian alike, was its assertion of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost; especially the reality, the directly Divine origin, and the trustworthiness of spiritual experience. John Wesley joined the little company of Oxford Methodists in 1729; Whitefield introduced himself to their notice shyly, as if conscious that he was a servitor seeking association with gentlemen, in 1735. This company of young men—known variously as the "Holy Club;" "Sacramentarians," from the frequency with which they took the Sacrament; "Bible bigots" and "Bible moths," because of their habit of studying the Greek Testament; and "Methodists," a term of itself significant, as if all religion were a matter of method—had united themselves together "to build each other up in the knowledge and fear of God." They lived by rule, they were constant in attendance at church, they visited the sick and prisoners and gave much alms, they held themselves responsible for the improvement of every moment of time, they sought to do everything to the glory of God. They practised asceticism, not only fasting on Wednesdays and

Fridays and during Lent, but depriving themselves of food until health began to fail.

"By degrees" (says Whitefield*) "I began to leave off eating fruits and such like, and gave the money I usually spent in that way to the poor. Afterward I always chose the worst sort of food, though my place furnished me with variety. My apparel was mean. I thought it unbecoming a penitent to have his hair powdered. I wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes; and though I was then convinced that the kingdom of God did not consist in meats and drinks, yet I resolutely persisted in these voluntary acts of self-denial, because I found them great promoters of the spiritual life."

He ate nothing during Lent (except on Saturdays and Sundays) but sage tea without sugar, and coarse bread. He constantly walked out in the cold mornings, till part of one of his hands was quite black. The secret of his asceticism is revealed in a comment of his own on the record of earlier religious endeavours: "I knew no more that I was to be born again in God, born a new creature in Christ Jesus, than if I was never born at all." In a seven weeks' sickness, which followed on his Lenten observances, he underwent severe mental struggles.

"The blessed Spirit" (says he †) "was all this while purifying my soul. All my former gross, notorious, and even my heart sins also, were now set home upon me; of which I wrote down some remembrances immediately, and confessed them before God morning and evening."

"About the end of the seventh week, after having undergone innumerable buffetings of Satan, and many months' inexpressible trials by night and day under the spirit of bondage, God was pleased at length to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold on His dear Son by a living faith, and by giving me the Spirit of adoption, to seal me, as I humbly hope, even to the day of everlasting redemption."‡

John Wesley, who was the spiritual director of the

* Philip's *Life and Times of George Whitefield*, p. 18.

† Ibid. p. 21.

‡ Gledstone's *Life and Travels of George Whitefield*, p. 25.

Oxford company, was still a formalist when he began to discharge, and to discharge zealously, his clerical functions. He was attracted to some German Moravians on board the vessel which was taking him as chaplain to Georgia, observing first their meekness, and the great seriousness of their demeanour, and afterwards their composure, even that of their women and children, in a storm.* He subsequently sought an interview with one of their pastors.

"I soon found" (says Wesley †) "what spirit he was of, and asked his advice with regard to my own conduct. He said, 'My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?' I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it and asked, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?' I paused, and said, 'I know he is the Saviour of the world.' 'True,' replied he, 'but do you know he has saved you?' I answered, 'I hope he has died to save me.' He only added, 'Do you know yourself?' I said, 'I do.' But I fear they were vain words."

His ministry in Georgia was not a happy one. "I went to America," he writes,‡ "to convert the Indians; but oh! Who shall convert me!" For some months he continued the subject of disquiet, until, having returned to England, he went one evening §

"very unwillingly to a Society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ; Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

I have quoted these often cited passages, not only because of their great interest, but also because of their importance in the history of the Evangelical Revival. The experience

* The *Works of the Rev. John Wesley* (London, 1809), vol. i. pp. 186-87.

† Ibid. p. 188.

‡ Ibid. p. 248.

§ Ibid. p. 280.

of strong religious natures largely determines that of their followers ; the type of theological teaching marking spiritual communities is given by the struggles with error of their founders. Second only to the hatred of sin and the desire for holiness, which characterize all churches, is the antipathy of earnest souls to those false conceptions of the spiritual life which hinder men's spiritual progress ; and it is the protest against these various false conceptions which gives its special character to the theology of different communities. The experience of Paul determined the theology of the Gentile Christians ; the spiritual conflicts of Luther marked the theology of the Reformation. The "note" of the Evangelical theology is the doctrine of assurance : it is so because the assurance of the forgiveness of sin and of Divine sonship was the "conversion" of Whitefield and Wesley, and those who gathered round them.

The doctrine of assurance is but a development of what I have already affirmed to be the distinctive feature of Methodist preaching—the doctrine of the Holy Ghost ; especially the reality, the directly Divine origin, and the trustworthiness of spiritual experience. Here, in relation to one critical question, the most momentous which can occupy a man's concern, he is asked, "Can you trust the Spirit of God ? and are you willing to recognise His presence in the response your whole being makes to Him ?" Nothing in the preaching of the early Methodists attracted more attention, nothing aroused more antagonism, than their preaching of the Holy Ghost. The brutal words more than once uttered by men who were threatening Whitefield, "I'll crush the Holy Ghost out of him," is an evidence of this. The controversies carried on against them by the clergy, both dignified and undistinguished, turned mainly on this point. A chaplain of Lady Huntingdon's was told by the Archbishop of York, "Were you

to inculcate the morality of Socrates, it would do more good than canting about the new birth.* It is not hard to understand this hostility. The doctrine of spiritual regeneration, the revelation of which is made to faith, is directly opposed to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; and the assurance of forgiveness is the antithesis of priestly absolution. Here is the fundamental weakness of the Evangelical party in the Church of England. Distinguished modern representatives of that party are obliged to dilute the significance of regeneration until it becomes a mere phrase descriptive of ecclesiastical position; and they are equally obliged to ignore the interpretation of the Absolution in the order of Morning and Evening Prayer, which is supplied by the form of Absolution in the order for the Visitation of the sick, and by the office for the Ordering of priests. Whitefield and Wesley, like the Evangelical clergy since, were accustomed to appeal to the Homilies and the Articles in vindication of their fidelity to their Church. But they had no reply when taunted with want of adherence to the offices.

"You tell your readers" (says a clergyman, attacking Whitefield †) "it is plain beyond all contradiction that comparatively but few of those that are born of water are born of the Spirit likewise; or, to use another Scriptural way of speaking, many of those that are baptized with water, are not effectually, at least, baptized with the Holy Ghost.' But, prithee, Sir, attend now to the few following places which I set before you, to confront your ill-grounded assertion."

He then quotes the office of Baptism, and the Rubric at the end of it, and adds triumphantly:

"All this, Sir, I take to be direct evidence against you, not to be evaded by the word 'effectually,' with which you thought proper to guard your assertion. All the members of our church were baptized in

* *Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i. p. 280.

† Philip, 86.

infancy. She declares them regenerate, and gives hearty thanks to God that it has pleased him to regenerate such infants with his Holy Spirit. The church supposes that they have already been born again, and so does not command them to be baptized or born again a second time: for to be born more than once in a spiritual sense, is just as impossible as to be born twice in a natural."

To this trenchant criticism Whitefield's only reply was an entry in his diary, "Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord." The inconsistency of the position could not but be increasingly felt as the results of Evangelical preaching became more marked in magnitude and character; and it had much to do with that reluctance to leave Methodist societies in the charge of the Evangelical parish clergy, which finally led to the secession from the Church of both the Wesleyan and the Countess of Huntingdon's societies.

No such doctrinal formularies separated the preaching of Methodists from the teaching of the orthodox Nonconformists; the Methodists were, as has been frequently observed, re-affirmers of Puritanism. The great doctrine of justification by faith requires the doctrine of assurance to supplement and to guard it; for men crave certitude in their religious experience, and if they cannot receive it directly from God, they will demand it from the hands of a priesthood. That assurance was possible, the early Nonconformists did not deny; but few of them either preached it or claimed to have received it. Nothing is more pathetic in Puritan biography than the gentle, awe-stricken, trembling tone in which personal hopes and personal confidence are expressed; for the most part we are listening to "the still, sad music of humanity;" there is no jubilation until the hour of death, and often not then. Wesley's mother told her son that she had never heard the doctrine of assurance preached. She knew that her father (one of the most celebrated of the ejected clergy, Dr. Annesley, of St. Giles's, Cripplegate) had no doubts concerning his acceptance with God, but he did not make

this a subject of teaching. There is something very beautiful in the story of Dr. Watts's death.

"When he was almost worn out by his infirmities, he observed, in conversation with a friend, that he remembered an aged minister used to say that the most learned and knowing Christians, when they come to die, have only the same plain promises of the Gospel for their support as the common and unlearned; 'and so,' said he, 'I find it.' . . . He discoursed much of his dependence upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ; and his trust in God, through the Mediator, remained unshaken to the last. 'I should be glad,' he said, 'to read more, yet not in order to be confirmed more in the truth of the Christian religion, or in the truth of its promises; for I believe them enough to venture an eternity on them.' " *

How unlike in tone, however, is this from Wesley's confident assertion—"If we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, which He will not do unless we are regenerate, surely we must be sensible of it;" and from the typical Methodist aspiration—

"We hope to die, shouting—
'The Lord will provide.' "

The difference between the early Congregationalists and the Methodists was very much the difference between the Church after the Ascension and the Church after Pentecost. It was a difference, not so much in the truths held as in the tone and temper, the spiritual quality, of the men who held them. For the practical power of truth, however, alike in him who believes it and in those to whom it is uttered, this difference is immense. The early Methodists had "received power;" God gave them "not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline." The faith which the Puritan held with caution was a shield with which the Methodist quenched the fiery darts of the wicked one; and truths had all the charm of freshness as they came glowing from ardent souls.

* Quoted in Stoughton's *Religion in England under Queen Anne and the Georges*, vol. i. pp. 190, 191.

Here seems to me the chief reason of the reserve and diffidence with which the Methodists were at first greeted by the Dissenters. This has been attributed to the hope the Dissenters had of being "comprehended" in the National Church, and to the fear which possessed their leaders of being implicated in the Methodist "irregularities" which were scandalising the bishops. Intellectual intolerance towards the inconsistency of the Methodist position may have affected some Dissenters; impatience with those who were ignoring the conscience, and defying the scruples, which had made the pathway of the Non-conformists a life-long bitterness. But deeper than all lay this variance in personal habit; "no man having drunk old wine desireth new." Long before the century was out the reserve and diffidence were gone. The Dissenting position was vindicated; the Methodists could only be allowed to develop their purpose under the Toleration Act. But, more important still, the new life of Methodism had quickened the Dissenting spirit as well as revived the "Dissenting interest;" had reawakened the faith of the churches, and enlarged their activities on every hand.

There was nothing which, in the first half of the eighteenth century, England needed so much as the stirring of a new spirit. There was by no means a lack of piety; but it dwelt at home, without aggressiveness and without confidence. The brutality of the lower, and the debauchery of the upper, orders were patent and have been described by every historian of the period. Nowhere was there a generous faith in humanity; neither in the secular nor in the religious life was there any hope. Cynicism prevailed in the world; alarm possessed the Church. Rapacity, venality and treachery marked politicians. The foremost writers were Swift—the Yahoo of literature, belittling his nation and befouling the race to

which he belonged ; and Addison and Steele—seeking to reform the manners of the age, all unconscious that the *Spectator* would come to be quoted as an illustration of the age's indelicacy ; and Pope—the balance of whose thought and the polish of whose style make us the more regret that there is not any fire from heaven in his verse. The tone of Christian writing was wholly apologetic ; and defences of religion—for men spoke then of their religion, not of their faith—were introduced by laments over prevailing infidelity. “It is come, I know not how,” says Bishop Butler *—and the judicial character of his genius makes a few words from him of more value than pages of clerical lamentation—“to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry ; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all persons of discernment ; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were, by way of reprisal, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.”

It was an age of despondency, self-consciousness, and insincerity ; the spirit which possessed Whitefield and Wesley was of confidence, devotion and earnestness. They preached of human depravity, man's need of Divine assistance for spiritual good : with Whitefield's name has been associated the saying that “man is half beast, half devil.” The early Methodist preachers were not theologians ; doubtless they did not carefully define their terms ; nor had they clear conceptions of that “human nature” of which they spoke. But the doctrine of a fallen humanity is really a more generous doctrine than that which represents men as all that man might be expected

* Advertisement to the “*Analogy*,” 4to. (London, 1736.)

to be; immeasurably nobler than the scorn of human nature concealed under the guise of pity and toleration which marked their age. "There is no man," says Coleridge,* "so base, but that at some time or other, and in some way or other, he admits that he is not what he ought to be;" and, "thanks to the image of our Maker not wholly obliterated from any human soul, we dare not purchase an exemption from guilt by an excuse, which would place our melioration out of our own power." When Whitefield spoke of depravity, and Wesley urged men to flee from the wrath to come, it was to prepare them for a message of love and holiness. It was confidence in human nature which made these preachers appeal directly to the conscience of their hearers, and ply them as men who knew how to win their hearts. Wesley has been described as a great logician and Whitefield as a master of rhetoric. But each of them was preëminently a simple-natured man, inspired with a confidence that subordinated the arts of the schools to itself, a purpose that preserved him from self-consciousness or trickery. Lord Stanhope says that Whitefield's "manner was theatrical and his language indiscreet;" and quotes his description of the Lord's Passion as if actually present—"Hark! hark! do you not hear!" "Such little arts," he adds, "are seldom found with sincerity, and yet no preacher was ever more zealous and fervent than Whitefield." No suspicion of his earnestness possessed those who heard him; the delicate Chesterfield was carried away by his oratory; the shrewd Franklin was roused by him into a momentary enthusiasm. And just as those who heard Whitefield did not accuse him of histrionism; so those who knew Wesley were persuaded of his simplicity; his logic did not become sophistical, his organising faculty did not degenerate into *finesse*. Very

* *The Friend*, vol. i. pp. 130, 131. (Pickering. 1837.)

rarely are men so gifted preserved from the perils of their gifts; the lofty enthusiasm of their faith sustained them, they were possessed by the Spirit of their calling.

To read the story of the labours, the persecutions and the deliverances, not only of Whitefield and Wesley, but of many others of the early Methodist preachers, is like reading a continuation of the Acts of the Apostles. Sleeping in humble chambers, or on bare boards, with a saddle-bag for a pillow, or perchance a volume of *Notes on the New Testament*; eating the coarsest bread, or gathering blackberries from the hedge, they passed rapidly across the land; and towns which, at their first visits, would not admit them to a lodging, came afterwards to welcome them as beloved friends, and finally to uncover before them as saints. Struck at, they did not feel the blow; wounded, they wiped the blood from their faces and went on preaching; stoned sometimes, or half drowned, or beaten, they rose upon their feet to reënter the place whence they had been driven, or pass on to another, and before nightfall their voices would be heard again. Brought before magistrates, they were firm; in presence of the mob, collected; but always meek and gentle, with soft answers turning away wrath, meeting conciliation with thanks and smiles. Wesley was constitutionally courageous, Whitefield constitutionally timid; but each was alike brave when duty led to danger and uncomplaining in the experience of wrong. And ever the same words were on their tongues—repentance first, and then the promise of forgiveness made to faith. Speaking originally from the fulness of a recent experience, they went on to speak with a confidence that their appeals would not be in vain which came from the remembrance that just such men and women as those whom they were addressing had found the power of life in their words. No wonder that rude crowds were awed in their presence, that the hand

raised against them forbore to throw the stone; that the lip grew tremulous which cursed them, and wrathful eyes filled with tears. Yet nobler triumphs were theirs; their enemies became Christ's converts; under their ministry men learned to preach the faith which once they blasphemed. The feeling that God was with them was their inspiration; "they looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed."

"Endurance is the crowning quality,
And patience all the passion of great hearts;
These are their stay, and when the leaden world
Sets its hard face against their fateful thought,
And brute strength, like a scornful conqueror,
Clangs his huge mace down in the other scale,
The inspired soul but flings his patience in,
And slowly that outweighs the ponderous globe,—
One faith against a whole earth's unbelief,
One soul against the flesh of all mankind."

Of course men animated by such a spirit—not only the conviction of duty, but the sense of personal devotedness to Christ, and the confidence that they could interpret His will—were sure to come into conflict with English ecclesiastical authorities. There is something exquisitely amusing in the *naïveté* of Wesley's persuasion that he was a good Churchman while repudiating canonical obedience. The spirit of the true Churchman is that of Kingsley, who, in a sermon forcibly setting out the irrationality and impiety of offering a prayer to God for the removal of the "plague of rain," at that time deluging England, affirms his purpose, nevertheless, of using the prayer "if his bishop orders it; in which case," he adds, "my duty is to obey orders."* The Bishop of Manchester, too, being asked in his recent diocesan synod,† if "it was allow-

* "Why should we pray for Fine Weather?" p. 9. (London, 1860.)

† Held Nov. 25th, 1881. Reported in *Manchester Examiner and Times*, Nov. 26th.

able to a person to omit the Athanasian creed on any occasion when the rubric enjoined it, because he might not exactly like the way in which it was worded," replied that "he did not consider that a clergyman had the right to omit the creed, and at the same time he thought he might fairly throw the scruple of his conscience in that particular case upon the Church which directed him." In Wesley's second Conference, held 1745, the question is put,* "Is not the will of our governors a law?" The answer was emphatic: "No; not of any governor, temporal or spiritual. Therefore, if any bishop wills that I should not preach the Gospel, his will is no law to me." "But what if he produce a law against your preaching?" "I am to obey God rather than man." Again, the minutes of the fourth Conference, held 1747, contain this record: †

" 'You profess to obey both the rules and the governors of the Church, yet in many instances you do not obey them. How is this consistent?' 'It is entirely consistent. We act at all times on one plain uniform principle. We will obey the rules and governors of the Church whenever we can consistently with our duty to God. Whenever we cannot, we quietly obey God rather than man.' 'But why do you say you are thrust out of the churches? Has not every minister a right to dispose of his own church?' 'He ought to have, but in fact he has not. A minister desires that I should preach in his church, but the bishop forbids him. That bishop thus injures him, and thrusts me out of the church.' "

To the minutes of the Conference of 1786 he appends a statement concerning his irregularities.‡ "I have in some respects varied, though not from the doctrines, yet from the discipline of the Church." And enumerating the steps he has taken in the formation and rule of his own societies, including his administration of the sacraments

* Stevens's *History of Methodism*, vol. i. p. 312.

† Ibid. p. 322.

‡ Ibid. vol. ii. p. 307.

to them, his annual Conferences, and his ordination of ministers for America and Scotland, he proceeds :

" These are the steps which, not of choice, but of necessity, I have slowly and deliberately taken. If any one is pleased to call this separating from the Church he may, but the law of England does not call it so ; nor can any one be properly said to do so, unless, out of conscience, he refuses to join in the service and partake of the sacraments administered therein."

It was strange that a mind so candid as Wesley's did not acknowledge that discipline, equally with doctrine, is of the essence of a Church ; and that, as a matter of fact, since the Reformation, discipline even more than doctrine had been in controversy among the Churches in England. Strange, too, that he did not anticipate the retort, " You ought to obey God rather than man ! The question is, How is the will of God to be ascertained ? Canonical obedience is demanded on the ground that the Church is the interpreter, and her rulers the exponents, of the will of God." Wesley might say, as he did, that a man's judgment was to him the interpreter of God's mind, and a man's conscience the authority he could not without sin disown ; but in saying this, he abandoned the Church position, and in acting on the dictum he was a transgressor. He was subsequently compelled to practically repudiate his slightly petulant statement, " If any man calls [my action] separating from the Church, he may, but the law of England does not call it so." He could only obtain protection for his societies by claiming it under " the statute for exempting Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws ;" and the obnoxious title had to be recited in the " certificate " by which the license was obtained.

The untenableness of Wesley's position had much to do with the many secessions of his preachers and members to the Dissenting Churches. His professions that he did not

dissent from the doctrines of the Church, so far from conciliating the bishops, only made his schism seem the more wanton and unjustifiable. To the Countess of Huntingdon, whose fine aristocratic consciousness kept her aloof from Dissenters, the necessity of licensing her churches as Dissenting conventicles, seemed like a personal affront. Plain-speaking Berridge addressed her thus : *

"However rusty or rickety the Dissenters may appear to you, God hath His remnant among them ; therefore lift not up your hand against them for the Lord's sake, nor yet for consistency's sake, because your students are as real Dissenting preachers as any in the land, unless a gown and band can make a clergyman. The bishops look on your students as the worst kind of Dissenters ; and manifest this by refusing that ordination to your preachers which would be readily granted to other teachers among the Dissenters."

The Countess endeavoured to give her clergy the right, as her chaplains, to preach in chapels without the consent of the parish clergyman within whose bounds any such chapel was situated ; but the courts of law determined that she had no such privilege. "I am reduced," she wrote, "to turn the finest congregation, not only in England, but in any part of the world, into a Dissenting meeting-house !" "I am to be cast out of the Church now, only for what I have been doing these forty years—speaking and living for Jesus Christ."

Bitterly as the Methodist leaders were opposed to the Dissenting position, the Evangelical Revival made it philosophically consistent and politically strong by adding to the Dissenting theory a new article—the voluntary principle. The early separatists had, indeed, maintained that only spiritual men could properly contribute to the requirements of the Church ; but in the controversies between Puritans and Anglicans their voices were unheard ; and

* *Life and Times of the Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. ii. p. 424.

in the later history of ecclesiastical thought in England, the doctrine of religious liberty preceded by more than a century the doctrine of the Church's independence of the State's aid. Baxter might rail at the plea for absolute and universal toleration of opinion ; but the first generation of Nonconformist preachers taught that " it was the essential right of human nature for every man to worship God according to his convictions ; " " that this is antecedent to all human government, and can never be subject to it ; " and that all infringements upon it are contrary to the word of God. But the Dissenters of the early part of the eighteenth century also believed that it was the duty of the State to foster religion by special legislative enactment, and help the Churches with grants from the public funds. Doddridge, who regarded himself * " as perhaps scrupulous to a fault in anything in which religious liberty so much as seems to be concerned," " always pleaded for the reasonableness of submitting to a majority here, and of our being obliged, though we are Dissenters, to do our part towards maintaining that clergy which the authority of our country in general has thought fit to establish, and indeed, so far as I can judge, it is admitted by all but the Quakers, whose opposition is now mere matter of form." It was quite in accordance with the Dissenting principles of the time that the *Regium Donum* should be accepted for the relief of needy ministers, although the expediency of taking it was considered doubtful. In the latter half of the century all disposition to rely on the State for help disappeared. The growth and progress of the Methodist communities—the Calvinistic societies being supported mainly by the munificence of wealthy donors, the Wesleyan by the systematic contributions of all—revealed the true resources of the Church: the Dissenters also were

* Dr. Waddington's *Congregational History*, 1700—1800, p. 424.

stimulated to unwonted generosity; they learned to repudiate all gifts but those prompted by Christian feeling, and valued their voluntaryism as the mark and guarantee of their independence.

The acceptance of the voluntary principle gave definiteness to the political position of Dissenters, and reasonableness to their demands. It enabled them to define the relation of Churches one to another, and of all to the State; to formulate a theory of the duty of a government towards religion at once intelligible and just. What the State patronizes it must control. This is one of the first maxims of good government. The State cannot free itself from the responsibility of looking into the administration of any society which it dowers with its influence and its funds. No government can ever listen to a proposal to give absolute freedom of development to an institution which implicates the whole country in its action because it is singled out from other institutions for protection, patronage and support. The case is very different when the demand is simply that the State shall extend, equally to all Churches, the same legal protection it vouchsafes to any voluntary society whatever; guarding their property and defending their persons; itself responsible for nothing they may profess or do. Here is a proposal which, whatever difficulties may be in the way of carrying it out,—difficulties arising from the existence of a Church identified with the State for three centuries and a half, legislated for by the State, with its funds from public and those from private sources almost inextricably intermingled—carries with it no inherent absurdity, no legislative impossibility.

The older Dissenters were hampered in their demands for liberty of conscience by the feeling that, if times were propitious, they might ask for State favour; and this possibility made politicians regard the claim as only

another move in the great conflict waged among the Churches for supremacy. It was at supremacy that the Puritans aimed ; and Episcopal chaplains complained that the Congregationalists of New England were exerting supremacy there. We need not wonder at this. It is in human nature. It would argue defective religious earnestness if a Church did not endeavour to attain all the influence regarded by it as legitimate ; only the deep conviction that State patronage is not a lawful advantage to any Church can keep the State from being implicated in ecclesiastical controversies. The plan of "comprehension," the alternative suggested by those who, believing the State-church principle, recognise the injustice of the establishment and endowment of one favoured form of religion, has never commended itself to statesmen. If a condition of religious indifference could be depended on to last, or if all men could hold their faith with philosophic calmness, comprehension might coëxist with peace. It is not so ; statesmen read this in history ; religious men perceive it in the stirrings of their own enthusiasm. What Isaac Taylor says of the Calvinistic controversy among the Methodists is true of every doctrinal question which can awaken a profound interest in the human heart ; and what theological question cannot do this ?

"In times of coolness and indifference Arminians and Calvinists find it easy to be cheaply wise, and may agree to hold their differences in abeyance : they pass the time of their hibernation peacefully enough in adjoining dens. But it cannot be so with men who, in solemn earnestness, believe their belief, and who are called out to utter their convictions in terms decisive, and intelligible to the multitude."

The voluntary principle, moreover, is not, according to that statement of it on which Dr. Chalmers found it so easy to construct a *reductio ad absurdum*, a mere application of the law of supply and demand. It is the belief

that all which is needed—not money alone, but wisdom, self-devotion, enthusiasm, skill—for the work of the Church, the Lord and Inspirer of the Church will supply. “The silver and the gold are mine, saith the Lord,” so reads the advocate of State-churches, “therefore we may properly ask for endowment from public funds.” “The silver and the gold are mine, saith the Lord; therefore we will render Him his own;” so responds the Christian heart. Church history contains nothing simpler, nothing nobler, than the story of the Methodist itinerant ministry. Men were found able to preach; Wesley told them to give up business, handicraft, farm, and go preaching, enduring hardship, taking nothing, leaving their families to the care of the Lord. They went. By and by, when societies were gathered, and many converts had learned to value the gospel, Wesley said, “You ought to remember the men who have given up everything for you; you must sustain them and their wives and children.” The societies did so. Here is something very different from the law of supply and demand. “Liberal applications lie” in this voluntary principle; self-denial is not wanting when self-denial is required; generosity answers when generosity is invoked. The Methodist doctrine is the trustworthiness of the spiritual experience; the history of Methodism illustrates the trustworthiness of the spiritual life, that is, the voluntary principle. The development of the Wesleyan polity is another instance of it. The new Christian nation, whose growth in a hundred and fifty years I sketched at the opening of my lecture, has made great demands on its rulers—prudence, courage, large-heartedness, forethought, enthusiasm, purpose, patience; it has required of its subjects loyalty, teachableness, generosity, devotion, trust; and all have been forthcoming. To tell the triumphs of voluntarism would be to write the history of religion and of philanthropy during the last century; to reveal its

springs we must unveil that absolute faith which the Church reposes in her Lord.

To understand the influence of the Evangelical Revival on the growth of Congregationalism, we must consider two things: first, that the great feature of the Evangelical Revival was the preaching of the Spirit; and next, that the organ of the Spirit is the Church. The Methodists had no sufficient doctrine of the Church. When Wesley was returning to Oxford, with strong leanings towards a life of seclusion, he travelled some miles to see a "serious man."* "Sir," said this person, in words which Wesley never forgot, "you wish to serve God and go to heaven; remember you cannot serve Him alone; you must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." Wesley's joining the "Holy Club," and his subsequent institution of societies, shew how apt a learner he was. Before the formation of his own classes he was accustomed to frequent the "societies" in London, which were also largely frequented by Whitefield and other leaders of the movement. These societies were companies of earnest people who gathered together for fellowship, for mutual edification, and prayer. When he formed his own societies, he thus defined a "united society"—"a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness; united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their own salvation." How was it that Wesley did not see it was Church fellowship which he was here defining? and that these assemblies were, in fact, Churches in an imperfect form? To have recognised the real scope of his purpose would have broadened his whole polity; it would have prevented him from attaching his name to his communi-

* Stevens, i. 71.

ties ; it would have saved his societies from many a storm and danger they have since experienced, and have made Methodism a more widely influential power. He would probably have given Churches a much larger sphere of action, and left them far more freedom of development than he gave to his " united societies ; " and assigned the laity a place in the government, as he gave them a place in the instruction and discipline, of the community. But to have acknowledged this would have involved his breaking away from the Church of England and becoming a Dissenter ; and this he was not prepared to do. The force of his accusation against the Church of England was, however, nowise weakened by his declining to call himself a separatist, and so long refusing his societies the title " Churches." What was the use of styling that institution his Church, outside of which he had to go for spiritual fellowship, which did not profess to gather earnest men together that they might " watch over one another in love," and " help each other to work out their own salvation " ? Both his preachers and hearers felt the incongruity, and joined Congregational Churches in great numbers. The Calvinistic Methodists contributed to the strength of Congregationalism in the same way. The influence of a clear and consistent doctrine is sure to be felt, even among a people so " practical," so intolerant of ideas as the English. " Logical continuity and moral causation," says Mr. Gladstone,* " are stronger than the conscious thought of man ; they mock it, and play with it, and constrain it, even without its knowledge, to suit their purpose."

Mr. Gladstone uses these words when speaking of the relation of the Evangelical movement of the eighteenth to the Tractarian movement of the nineteenth century.

* *Gleanings of Past Years*, vol. vii. p. 225.

It is impossible not to believe that the connection between these movements is more than a casual one when we recall the family names which are found in the history of Tractarianism, and consider that so many of the leaders of the school had been earnest Evangelicals. The connection I believe to have been this. The Evangelicals taught, and taught strongly, the Divine and supernatural origin of the spiritual life; and that the life divinely communicated must be divinely sustained. But the Evangelical theology taught nothing of the provision which Christ had made for giving that life organised expression; nothing of the Church as "the pillar and ground of the truth," the "body of Christ," an enduring recipient of the perennial energy and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When, therefore, Evangelicalism had passed beyond that first stage at which individual experience—regeneration, conversion—was the all-engrossing topic; when its votaries began to inquire about the permanence and order of this spiritual life, they had to seek an answer elsewhere. They found it within that very Establishment in which Evangelicalism had been content to live with High Churchism; like hostile brothers, of one household though mortal foes. For permanence they had proffered them the historical continuity of the Church; for the immanent Saviour—the real presence in the sacrament; for the guiding Spirit—the voice of councils and the ancient creeds. Another answer might have been given them, had not their prejudices, and perhaps our faults, prevented their asking it of the Dissenting Churches; an answer more in accordance with the Evangelical tradition. The doctrine of assurance—the trustworthiness of the spiritual consciousness when it tells of pardon and adoption—carries with it the possibility of continued inspiration, the trustworthiness of the spiritual consciousness in men trained and disciplined in inter-

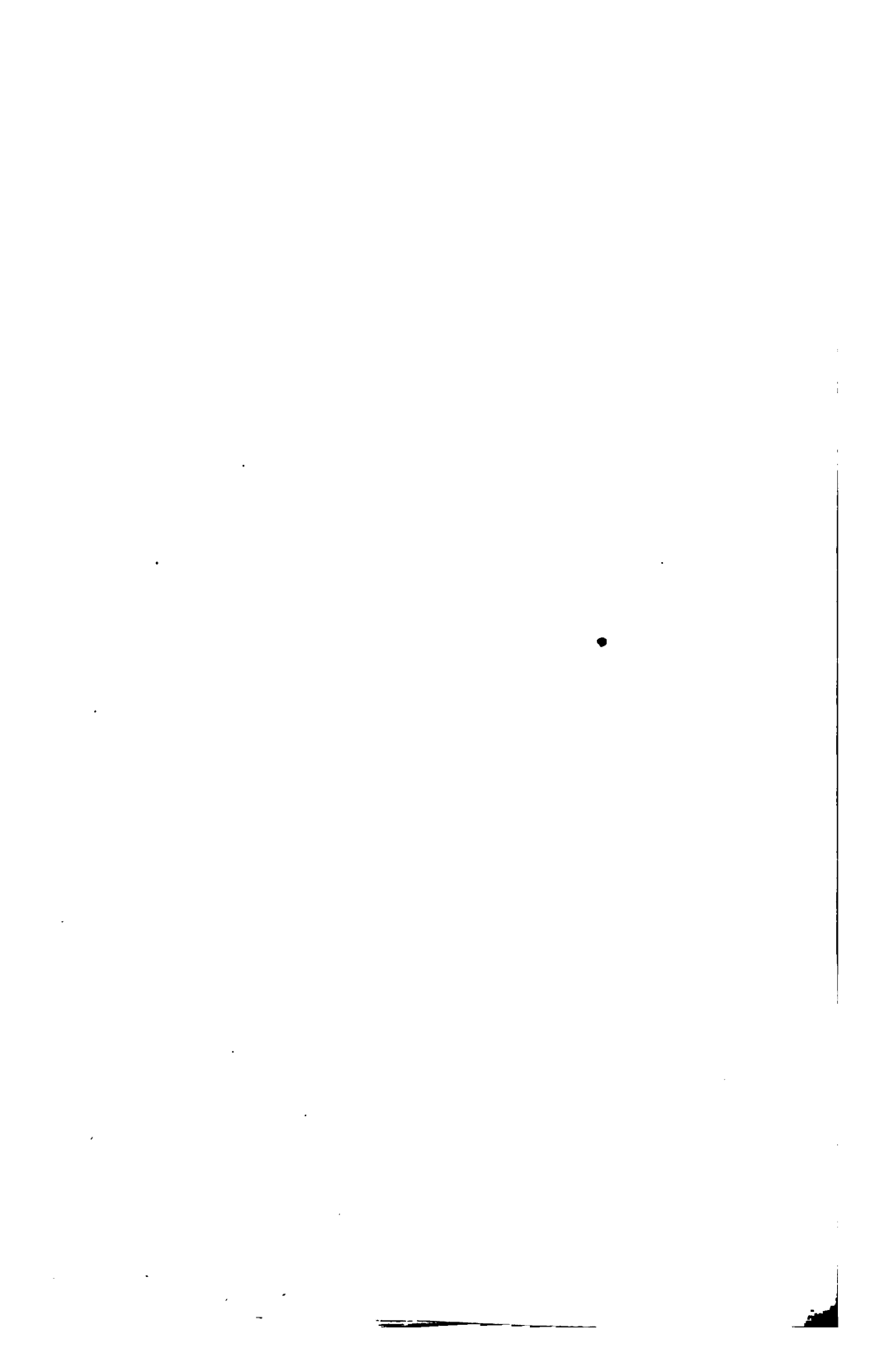
preting the thought of Christ, consecrated to His service, and sanctified by His Spirit; their individual powers and sympathies conspiring to make a nobler whole, "all coming together" unto "a perfect man" who waits to catch and to obey the voice of God. "The possibility of continued inspiration," I say, not of infallibility. For "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;" even in inspiration there is liability to error; there is responsibility for what is heard, and the interpretation given to what is heard. That trustworthiness of the spiritual man, that possibility of his receiving and knowing the word of Christ, are the foundation and aspiration of our Church order, the idea of Congregationalism. "Tell it unto the church." "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The idea of the trustworthiness of the spiritual consciousness has another application, in the conception of the development of doctrine. To the spiritual man the promise is made, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all things;" that sublime promise in which Christ, anticipating the progress of Christendom, lays His hand on "all things"—the advance of knowledge, the achievements of criticism, the growth of thought—and claims them as His own. "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." The Calvinistic controversy which divided the Methodists has now no interest; and that not because the questions agitated have been settled, but because the very conceptions out of which they grew have disappeared, being lost in larger modes of thinking: the order of the world is imaged as an order of growth, not of construction; God is the Father,

ever present with His children, not a far off monarch issuing decrees. The controversy was silenced before it was lost sight of; a new charity sprang out of the holy shame which possessed Wesley and Whitefield, that men who so loved and trusted one another, who were so worthy of one another's trust and love, could have used bitter language against each other, and wounded each other's hearts. But mutual sympathies cannot efface contradictions of thought; we must find some intellectual justification for our confidence in each other as holding the truth despite our differences of opinion. We find it in the belief that behind all truths apparently opposed there is a further truth reconciling the contradiction; and in our confidence that, if we are faithful, "God will reveal even this unto us." And we turn with reverential gratitude to the old patriarch of Leyden, who knelt to bless the pilgrims on their adventurous way, and read again his prophetic words: "I charge you before God and His holy angels, that if God reveal anything to you by any other instrument of His, ye be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am verily persuaded, I am very confident, the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word."

We sometimes wonder at the long patience of the Methodists with a Church that had no place for them within its borders, as it has never had a place for spiritual, as contradistinguished from ecclesiastical, zeal. We may believe that God had some good purpose of His own, in keeping them from being merged in eighteenth century Nonconformity; the result will be larger and richer when the fulness of the times is come, and the Churches shall flow together again. But this belief does not reconcile us to that constitution of Church and State which has compelled all these separations. Liberal-minded Churchmen are

not backward to lament the narrow policy which persecuted the Puritans, ejected the Nonconformists, and could not find room for the Methodists; they urge us to return, assuring us that such things can never be again. We reply—that policy is inherent in the Establishment, which can never rise above its source, nor cleanse itself from the taint of its origin. In a Church established on an unworthy compromise there is no room for the development of any simple spiritual principle. The National Church of this country is an expression of the policy of the Tudors, and must be hostile to civil and religious freedom. It cast out the Puritans in the sixteenth century, it cast out the Nonconformists in the seventeenth century, it cast out the Methodists in the eighteenth century: it will cast out another body in the nineteenth century, unless, like some of the earlier forms of life, it bursts asunder, and by its own disruption gives freedom to its imprisoned sons.



IX.

*BROAD CHURCH DOCTRINE AND
INDEPENDENCY.*

BY

EDWARD WHITE.

Contents of Lecture 9.

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IX.

BROAD CHURCH DOCTRINE AND INDEPENDENCY.

THE names popularly assigned to religious parties are seldom to be taken as adequate descriptions, much less as definitions. Whether originally given in self-praise by the parties themselves, in dis-praise by their opponents, or simply affixed by uncritical bystanders, they seldom express more than one salient characteristic. They are likely, moreover, to prove seriously misleading, unless supplemented by several additional designations fixing genus and species with greater accuracy, so as to diminish the danger of caricature or exaggeration. This is especially true of the so-called Broad Church and of Independency, names which summon up a host of one-sided misconceptions, and suggest several injurious misapplications, unless we first succeed in more precisely determining the theory and practice of the systems thus briefly denoted in ordinary discourse.

Neither of these names expresses on the surface the most important characteristic of the parties whose specialities they are roughly taken to represent. On the surface, Broad Church and Independency, taken simply, suggest theories of ecclesiastical constitution. And rightly; but they connote in both cases far deeper interests and principles of thought—two historical developments of spiritual, intellectual, and political life, underlying, and in fact determining, all the superficial tendencies, modes

of speech, and motives of action in ecclesiastical and secular affairs, which distinguish them to the popular eye and understanding.

Both Broad Church and Independency are historical developments. But one of them has a far more ancient history than the other. Independency, as we conceive it, is not simply an outgrowth of the Reformation, founded on a protest against other men's mistakes and corruptions, but it claims to be a positive endeavour towards reproducing primitive Christianity in doctrine and discipline, founded on spiritual faith in the permanent authoritative record of the apostles of Christ. All that most deeply characterizes its revived energy in modern times is seen, we think, in the history of the primitive Church, as Mr. Hatch has recently demonstrated in his *Bampton Lectures*, and Bishop Lightfoot in his *Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles*. Its determination to build on the foundation of written apostolic authority believed to be Divine; its immovable conviction that the cause of obedient faith and of right reason is one; its rooted habit of identifying the voices of Christ and the conscience; its zeal for individuality of thought and inquiry; its resistance to sacerdotal or rationalistic interference between God and the soul; its zeal for the local and independent organization of religious societies, ungoverned by prelatical or synodical authorities;—all of these things were confessedly characteristic of the earliest ante-Nicene Christianity.

The Broad Church party, on the other hand, is but a recent type of Anglicanism, as Anglicanism is for the most part a recent modification of post-Nicene Catholicism. The Broad Church is an historical development, but its history is restricted to the last fifty years; it has been gradually evolved as a reaction against the previous domination of two older types of English religion, the High Church and the Anglican Evangelical; and, in its

most recent form, can claim no direct spiritual descent from any ancient type of historical Christianity whatsoever. It is a growth of modern thought. It has been gradually evolved. It did not spring into being suddenly, or in a final shape, like the immortal Minerva from the head of Jupiter ;—it has grown in the struggle for existence both in strength and in extension ; but its progress has been from a more defined form to a less, from a beginning of planetary brightness and comparative clearness of disc, into a cometary nebulousness, a sort of diffused radiance without much nucleus, and now spreading itself over half the sky amidst much gratulation from those who hail it as the true daylight.

The name of the Broad Church has in our time carried with the populace a certain presumption in its favour. It has been taken by those who kindle at the very name of liberty, by whomsoever proclaimed, almost as a self-evident argument in recommendation of those who bear it ; as a continual protest against all that is narrow in sympathy, shallow in criticism, unscientific and superstitious in belief, sectarian in bias, and puritanical in moral tone. A name, nevertheless, singularly and strangely out of harmony with Christ's description of His own religion in the words of the Sermon on the Mount, "*Enter ye in by the narrow gate : for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. For narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leadeth unto life, and few they be that find it :*"* words which plainly indicate that the path of eternal life lies between fixed boundaries, between two extremes of thought and practice ; and that Christianity, as Christ taught it, requiring in its defence the "*armour of righteousness both on the right hand and the left,*" differed

* St. Matthew vi. 13.

from modern views ; unless it can be shown that His idea of *narrowness* and the modern idea of *breadth* are identical. The title of the Broad Church, in presence of our Lord's emphatic description of true Christianity, is at least a sinister and unfortunate appellation. It has led multitudes to fancy that government by apostolic authority is inconsistent with freedom, and that the obedience of faith is the mark of a puerile culture. Historical Independency has made no pretensions to such breadth, but has aimed to lead men in the safe way which Christ solemnly declared to be "narrow."

It is evident that the task of tracing the relations of these two tendencies and modes of thought, and the history of their reciprocal influence in our generation, is one of no common difficulty and delicacy. I shall attempt this task with no desire to glorify Independency as a party, yet under the conviction that if ever there was required great directness of speech in assertion of what Howe calls "the grand and ancient and received truths" of revelation, it is in the matter of distinguishing at this time between Broad Church doctrines and Independency, with their respective tendencies in things spiritual and secular. In doing this it will be impossible to satisfy all who call themselves Independents, but I doubt not I shall represent in the main the convictions of the great community in whose name we now speak.

For the system of thought which is summed up as Independency is, as we believe, in the main, Catholic and Apostolic Christianity in its leading principles ; and if not that it is nothing worth. If Independency is the name of a miserable sect, without a past or a future, having no vital and filial relation or sympathy with the spiritual life of former ages of Christendom, having no solid basis in the revealed truth of Almighty God, having no commission from the Infallible Spirit of Truth, having no aim or

outlook towards visible comprehension of all that is holy and true in every neighbourhood, may its tongue cleave to the roof of its mouth, and its right hand forget its cunning ! Not so did our forefathers conceive of it. The true but as yet unrealized idea of Independency (unrealized because the majority of our fellow-Christians, whom we duly love and honour, hold differing connexional views, which forbid complete local unity) is the union into one Church of all spiritual Christians in the same locality. It can never appear in its true glory until *all* the believers in Christ in a locality embrace it, throwing their knowledge, faith, special revelations, worshipping powers, culture, wealth, activity, and joint and mutual educational force, into the common stock for reciprocal help, and for Divine service, in home and foreign missions. For Independency to become one among several "denominations" may be its fate or its fault, but it was not its original formative idea. It builds itself on the rock of Divine Revelation, holding the certainty of those facts and doctrines in which it has been instructed by the apostles of Christ. It recognizes the ever-present authority of the living Christ in His Church. It maintains a church-form which is not merely an obedience to primitive example, and a discipline, in the ejection of openly evil livers, which can be defended by explicit precept, but it maintains this church-form and discipline to be necessary results of the first principles of the spiritual life which leads the twice-born sons of God to desire the society and support of like-minded souls—an end impossible of attainment under a system of parochial church-membership founded on the notion of baptismal regeneration in infancy. It seeks for local self-government, the only effectual antidote to sacerdotal sway. It seeks a ministry in which spiritual religion, scriptural learning, and Christian experience are the all-controlling qualifications; a ministry which cannot be bought and

sold, and which owes its temporal support, as all other honest professions do, to its deserts, and to the people's justice and love.

In our view, then, the subversion of historical Independency in its main outlines, by the subversion of the Faith, and of the Authority which is its justification and defence, would be a calamity in Christendom of the first magnitude. Take away the apostolic Scripture as a record of a Divine Revelation, and not only does the *raison d'être* of Independency vanish at once, but with it the force which has chiefly built up the religious liberties of Europe and America.

Now it is the nature of Broad Church thought in its most recent development to assail and subvert all that has been held most dear and true in historical Independency, and therefore I cannot shrink from avowing the persuasion, most unwillingly, that it is a far more dangerous enemy to Christianity than any form of High Churchmanship, an enemy which it is the duty and the vocation of Independency, beyond all other Christian combinations, to beware of, to confront, and to refel. I hold that all such pretensions to "breadth" are contrary to the narrowness which Christ declared to be of the essence of true religion; for the narrowness of God is broader than the breadth of unstable men. "*His commandment*" alone "is exceeding broad." To be broader than the Infinite Being Incarnate is a vain pretension.

But here at once it is necessary to explain that in thus speaking of the Broad Church doctrine we speak not of its earlier but of its later growth, its present most characteristic and energetic type—a doctrine which sets forth a Christianity without backbone or skeleton, a fluid molluscous mass of sentimental theism, professing unity with all other theistic religions and philosophies of Europe

and Asia, but producing none of the effects of apostolic Christianity; producing no conversions, except that of semi-believers into semi-sceptics; bringing on its followers no "offence of the Cross" from ungodly men, whether barbarous or cultivated; but notable chiefly for its steadfast denunciation of dogma—that is, of doctrinal truth—and for its exaltation of a charity signifying little else than a complacent optimism which contradicts the first elements of the gospel of Christ. This alone is the Broad Church doctrine of which we now purpose to speak.

There may be some who loosely call themselves, or are called, Broad Churchmen of the older type, who are separated from the orthodox High Church and Evangelical parties by imperceptible shades, just as there are earnest Evangelical preachers who are Ritualists in form. Of these better Broad Churchmen there are three varieties—the High Broad, who have sympathy with High Churchmen in their reverence for authority, and in admitting the utility of symbols and external forms; the Low Broad, admirably represented by the Rev. Llewellyn Davies, polemical especially against High Churchmen, and preserving the accidents, though not the essentials, of Calvinism; and thirdly, the Broad pure and simple, whose love is justice, who respect and are respected by all honest and earnest workers and truth-seekers, though feeling no special vocation to theological study. If these clergymen choose to call themselves Broad Churchmen, we may be permitted to regret the designation, but we do not impugn their position. They will all probably before long be absorbed in more powerful sections of the Church of England. The colours of the ecclesiastical spectrum fade into each other, and it is possible to describe only the more pronounced and prominent tints. On this occasion, for the sake of edification, I shall refer only to the Reds of our theological commonwealth.

Adhering, then, to the practical purpose of safeguarding Independency, now threatened by its most dangerous foes, it is needless to recount in detail the genesis of the Broad Church party as a whole, or its earlier stages of development. It has been often and ably told *how* an Evangelical education, followed by an Oxford training under Whately's logical instruction, inspired and sharpened the genius of Dr. Newman for the combat with the modern spirit of Individualism, which he, Dr. Pusey, Mr. Keble, and their associates, regarded as the very spirit of apostasy from the faith; *how* the growing success of this backward movement towards sacerdotal authority roused by reaction an energetic resistance in Whately, Hampden, Maurice, Arnold, Kingsley, Fitzgerald, Thirlwall, and the two Hares, all of whom understood that nothing less was at stake than the whole sum of the intellectual and religious gains of the last four hundred years, in the spirit of inquiry, and in the spirit of freedom, which is the spirit of Divine sonship; *how* Whately, especially in the *Cautions for the Times*, and in the work *On the Kingdom of Christ*, assailed the very foundation of Newman's system of sacerdotal authority, proved that the notion of an authoritative Church was a figment of later fancies, having no historical root in the early ages of Christianity, and showed that the teaching of Christ Himself is utterly irreconcilable with that scheme of hierarchical rule on behalf of which primitive sanction is invoked.

When the influence of these great leaders of the Broad Church first began to be felt in English religious thought, it was largely welcomed by spiritual men among the Independents as a wholesome reaction at once against sacerdotal pretension, and against the unlearned bigotry of the Anglican Evangelical school, while it infused a new and scientific vigour into the crusade against scepticism. Whatever might be the looseness of their opinions on

certain questions of doctrine, however Erastian their judgment on questions relating to the Church Establishment, all England was compelled to admit that a spirit of serious godliness, of courageous and devout consecration, was at the heart of the Broad Church movement. Its leaders battled, sometimes almost fiercely, against the Oxford revival of mediævalism; but men felt that these assailants of Oxford doctrine possessed in themselves all that was best in the deep and solemn earnestness of the system which they attacked. The last page of Dr. Arnold's diary, written on the night before his death, was a luminous example of the God-fearing temper of the party at large. They exposed to discredit sometimes the unscholarlike criticisms of the Simeonite Evangelicals; but all men were persuaded that Dr. Arnold and his leading associates were more than anything else Evangelical at heart, firm upholders of the Divine authority of Christ's apostles as the teachers of Christianity, sincere believers in the reality of dogmatic as well as historical revelation, reverent students of the sacred Scriptures, scholars characterized by patient and earnest thought, men of broad learning, men of prayer, men of God. Dr. Arnold especially, who had grown out of the two schools which on either hand he somewhat resisted, carried with him to his latest hour striking marks of their influence in limiting and qualifying the Catholic Church-doctrine, of which he had become the most renowned representative.

The desire of these early Broad Churchmen for more latitude of conviction was prompted by three legitimate influences. The progress of criticism had at length opened men's eyes in England to the impossibility of maintaining that traditional notion of a uniform and mechanical inspiration of the Bible in which so many generations of English Protestants had been bred. It was desired that the Scriptures should be edited and

interpreted in the light thrown upon them through the labours of the more solid and serious schools of European criticism. In the next place, they revolted against the High Church temper which had alienated one-half of the English people from the National Church, and had succeeded in blinding the other half to the commonest dictates of Christian sympathy and brotherhood. And lastly, they foresaw the inevitable breakdown of the Anglican institution amidst imminent political convulsions, as the tide of democracy rose higher and higher, unless the demands of the present and future were boldly met by leaders capable of comprehensive dealing with the awakening nation. But the Broad Church of Dr. Arnold and of his contemporary friends and fellow-workers never signified aught else than a revival of apostolic Christianity in its saving doctrine, in its Divine authority, in its catholic temper towards all God's sons and servants. Dr. Arnold would have died sooner than have consented to join the scorner in holding up the Bible, as a whole, to public contempt, as falsely claiming Divine authority over men's belief and life. He was too real and earnest in his spiritual experience to be capable of teaching religious scepticism from the seat of the Apostles, of undermining the public faith in Christ in the name of Conscience, or of assailing the teaching of His commissioned messengers under the pretence of historical criticism, of the love of freedom, or of zeal for God and humanity.

For such a degenerate phase of the Broad Church we must turn to the literature of the school in our own later time, a phenomenon of extreme English reaction to be probably accounted for by two causes: first, by the victorious advance of the opposite Anglican party of Traditionalists; and secondly, by the general diffusion through the atmosphere of the reckless and sceptical spirit which always accompanies the progress of sacerdotalism.

It is here that, with all consideration for personal excellence of character, and in some instances for remarkable literary distinction, and with due allowance for the innocent drifting of individual minds in the rapid currents of modern thought, a summary exposition must be given of the present condition of the faith of the Erastian Broad Church party, the self-styled advocates *par excellence* of liberal theology. The relation between this theology, as exhibited in the writings of its recent leaders, and that of Dr. Arnold or Archbishop Whately, is not that of development, but of distinct abjuration of the authority which their predecessors revered—the authority of the apostolic revelation, or else of distinct violence offered to its plainest central declarations. It is to a very large extent the theology of modern Unitarianism using the forms of speech, subscribing to the formularies, and occupying the pulpits of orthodox Anglicanism. When Mr. Stopford Brooke seceded from the Church of England, he not only acted the part of an honest man, but he revealed in the most public manner the position of the widespread party which he left behind him still clinging to the Establishment and its temporalities.

I shall now exhibit—apart from all personal references to distinguished living leaders, but on the authority of their own words—this form of ecclesiastical unbelief in its first principles and logical inferences, interposing as we pass along such reflections as seem to be necessary and useful on its reciprocal relations with historical Independency.

At the root of the new liberal scheme lies the anti-dogmatic principle. This is held from no mere sentimental dislike of authority, traditional or scriptural, but from an intellectual distrust of it. It is held that, while the earlier Broad Churchmen demolished the reviving Oxford principle of submission to traditional authority, it has been left for their successors to demolish the Puritan

principle of submission to apostolic or biblical authority. All, therefore, that can be alleged with any colour against the Bible, or against the extreme theories of a mechanically inspired Bible or canon of sacred books, or against any particular book of that canon, is set forth as the primer of true spiritual instruction. We shall make no way in real freedom, it is said, so long as a shred of superstitious reverence remains for the imaginary authority of the evangelists and apostles. Hence the criticism of this school is mainly antagonistic, destructive, and contemptuous. The evident mixture of the human element in the sacred books is boldly taken as evidence that all was human. The imperfection of manuscripts, the divided authority of Masora and Septuagint, the uncertain authorship of some books, the difficulty of distinguishing the claims of the books admitted into the canon and some excluded from it, the imperfect morality of the Old Testament, the strained quotations of the Old Testament in the New—all undermine the basis of an imaginary infallibility. The prophecies are held to be not literal forecasts of future events, but descriptions of a present and immediate future in terms that are eternally true of all similar incidents. The miracles cannot be regarded as credentials of the gospel, since they themselves require to be confirmed, and that is an impossibility. No one amidst the hazy testimony of the first two centuries can be certain of the reality of any of them. They are useless as evidence, they are contrary to experience, they offer violence to the scientific conception of government by law, and they are hindrances as arguments for piety. If St. Peter erred in conduct at Antioch and required correction by St. Paul, it is impossible to believe that either of them could be infallible in writing. Besides, there is no reason why inspiration should have terminated with the writing of the Bible in the first century. We expect an increase of inspiration

with the lapse of educational ages. Obedience to authority of any kind will not bear the test suggested by St. Paul himself, of "commending itself to the conscience." Here is the final test and the true authority. What liberal theology does is to own the primacy of the conscience, which, under the prevailing system, is acknowledged only at second-hand; to retain the liberty of thought which orthodox believers, whether Roman or Protestant, part with in deference to some authority falsely taken for granted as divine.

Refusing thus submission to any authority in religion, standing on the broad platform of the anti-dogmatic principle, it is evident that apostolic Christianity, as understood by historical Independency in common with all Evangelical Christendom, is swept away at one stroke—swept away with its miraculous history and supernaturally inspired doctrine on the redemption of the world by incarnate Deity. Nothing remains firm except conscience, and that which conscience may be allowed to approve in biblical or traditional religion. The real task, then, of the Broad Church party, of the latest measurement in breadth, is to *organize the rule of conscience*. You have no definite scheme of rewards and punishments in a future world to impart a missionary aspect to virtue. All men have an equal prospect of ultimate salvation. Virtue is a service man owes to himself. Even if there were no God, it would be no less the rule of life. To organize the rule of conscience in the Church, to reconcile culture with a reasonable faith, scientific fact with moral aspiration, we must trust to social forces motived by enthusiasm for our kind. The Lord's Supper is a witness and method of such fellowship with our kind, and with God our King. All poetry which burns with larger hopes, all art which feeds the inspiration of men, all science which brings new revelations of God, all travel, commerce, inventions, that

widen sympathy, are working towards the consensus of Christian consciences. Ecclesiastical authority annihilates the individual; the fallacious biblical authority deceives it. The only undeceiving light is the candle of the Lord within, the law written on the heart.

Thus, as it seems, Christ is extinguished as the Light of the world, in the name of conscience; and an implicit rejection of apostolic Christianity is set forth as the proper basis of a comprehensive national Churchmanship. Such is the final doctrinal development of a school which still speaks of Archbishop Whately, of Arnold, of Thirlwall, and of Maurice as their earliest founders. These great men were the founders of this school of Broad Churchmanship only as Luther and Calvin were the founders of the rebellious sects of the Reformation, only as St. John and St. Paul were the founders of the Gnostic and Manichæan sects of the ante-Nicene ages. In the earlier Broad Churchmen there was sometimes a certain deficiency of unction in dealing with the central facts of Christianity, and occasionally, as in Mr. Maurice, who never quite lost the chilling tendencies of his Unitarian birth and education, a certain disposition to accept the Unitarian interpretation of those facts; but speaking generally of this illustrious body of scholars and theologians, it may be affirmed that they were faithful to Christ as the Son of God, and faithful in submission to the apostolic revelation. In their view Christ could appeal to the conscience with an assurance of an echoing reply. Their younger successors in the Church of England make no secret of disowning every authority except that of the Urim and Thummim of their own moral inspirations, and in their mouths the language both of the Bible and of the Prayer Book is employed to convey ideas which the writers of both Bible and Prayer Book would have denounced as defiant infidelity. Probable Christendom has never seen,

since the days of Pascal's foes in France, so thoroughly mischievous a perversion of language as that which characterizes the teaching of the modern Broad Church clergy, considered as subscribers to the formularies of the Anglican Establishment, those formularies which include an explicit assertion of the Divine authority of the Scriptures.

The tendencies and methods of thought which have operated thus disastrously for faith in the National Church are so characteristic of the whole atmosphere of our time, and are so likely to influence minds of the Broad Church type among ourselves, that it is worth while to consider carefully for a few moments the action of this time-spirit in the sphere of science, of criticism, and of religion; a spirit in direct antagonism to the teaching of the Son of God, and to all that is most surely believed amongst us. What is it that has emboldened the teachers of the new Broad Church to assume their present position? We shall not err in attributing this theological movement chiefly to the influence of some sections of the scientific world. The advance made during the last generation in the knowledge and mastery of physical nature has been so marvellous that some of the living leaders of this advance have been tempted to confound the knowledge of facts with the speculations of able men founded upon them; that is, to confound absolute knowledge with the opinions or guesses of scientific men. Some even of the foremost adepts in certain departments of physical study have fallen into this snare, and have almost assumed the authoritative tone of apostles of a new revelation, supposed to contradict in its very foundations the doctrine of the Christian religion. The conflict between science and reputed revelation has been assumed by these writers to have driven the prophets of Judaism and Christianity completely out of the field; and the impression has been

widely diffused in our periodical literature that no minds of the first order, adequately informed of the facts of nature, are weak enough to adhere to the ancient notion of a special creation either of animated nature or of the human world, much less to admit the idea of a direct intervention of Eternal Power for man's salvation from sin and death. The "infinite azure of the past" has been pointed out as the true end and rest of man's life, rather than an ever-brightening future of individual being and blessedness. Not a few of the most famous biologists firmly exclude the very notion of a Personal God from their scheme of existence, and in the contemptuous term *Anthropomorphism* suppose they have summed up an irrevocable condemnation of all belief in a Divine Governor of the world. Every type of unbelief, from the most mystical pantheism down to the coarsest materialistic atheism, has occupied in many scientific and semi-scientific circles the space once assigned to theism and Christianity, and no effort has been spared by this active confederacy of biological infidels to extend the persuasion, in Mr. Froude's approving words, that "the ideas of Lucretius are supported by the best modern scientific thinkers."

It is true that other scientific leaders, of at least equal information with Mr. Froude, dispute the assumptions just referred to. Professor Tait, of Edinburgh, who is entitled by his complete knowledge of the subject, and by his personal eminence, to speak with authority, replies to Mr. Froude in these trenchant sentences :

"When we ask of any *competent* authority who were the 'advanced,' the 'best,' and the 'ablest' scientific thinkers of the immediate past, in Britain, we cannot but receive for answer such names as Brewster, Faraday, Graham, Rowan Hamilton, Herschel, Rankine, and Talbot. This must be the case, unless we use the word science in a perverted sense. Which of these great men gave up the idea that nature evidences a designing mind? But perhaps Mr. Froude refers to the advanced thinkers still happily among us (May, 1878). The

names of the foremost among them are not far to seek. But, unfortunately for his assertion, it is quite certain that Andrews, Joule, Clerk-Maxwell, Balfour Stewart, Stokes, Sir William Thomson, Rolleston, have each and all of them, when the opportunity presented itself, spoken in a sense altogether different from that implied by Mr. Froude."

"The assumed incompatibility of religion and science has been so often and so confidently asserted in recent times that it has come to be taken for granted by the writers of leading articles, and it is perpetually thrust broadcast before their too trusting readers. But the whole thing is a mistake, and a mistake so grave that no true scientific man—unless, indeed, he be literally a specialist—runs, in Britain at least, the smallest risk of making it."*

The "religion" of which Professor Tait here speaks is, as he subsequently shows in his reply to Mr. Froude, the Christian religion; and it is the Christian religion in its generally accepted form in which the great men above referred to have believed, notwithstanding "science," heart and soul.

Nevertheless, the pertinacity of a few leading professors of atheism and deism has of late spread abroad among numbers of half-educated literary men—persons of the class from whom the clergy of all churches are too often recruited, men educated chiefly on one side only—the notion that physical science has made an end of the Bible considered as the record of a supernatural revelation, and they have hastily assumed that this is the acknowledged issue of the conflict. The generality of the Broad Church clergy and their few analogues among ourselves and other churches—clever, and generally half-educated, but not spiritual men—offer precisely the soil in which such seed was likely to spring and grow, and we have seen the result of such one-sided reading and thinking in the audacity with which they have learned to handle the sacred Scriptures. "A collection of Jewish books," abandoned by

* "Does Humanity require a New Revelation?" By Professor Tait, F.R.S. *International Review*, 1878.

all the "advanced thinkers," by "all the ablest scientific men of modern times," a series of books proved by such men to contain only a tissue of old wives' fables, must surely deserve to be dealt with by a new criticism. And they have so dealt with them, with the result of dismissing from their belief every cardinal doctrine of apostolic Christianity. May it not be said without undue exaltation that it is no slight glory for Independency, as a whole, amidst the driving hurricanes of popular scepticism, that it has presented during these latter years an unshaken front in defence of the truth; and, building on the Bible itself, honestly interpreted, has remained firm in the faith amidst these storms? With few exceptions our leaders have understood and duly valued the objection that the Bible, in professing to be a supernatural revelation, is contrary to all experience in a universe governed by invariable law. It has been seen that this objection is based on forgetfulness of the fact that the Bible itself consists of two parts, of which the first is a solemn assertion of the reign of law, physical and moral, and the second a record of redemption asserted to be supernatural, because designed to save the transgressors of law. And still further the objection has been traced to its true origin in the imperfect induction on which such scepticism builds; since human sin is a fact to which the universal consciousness of man testifies, and a fact that must be taken account of. But sin cannot in any way be regarded as a natural and orderly phenomenon, since it is not law, but the transgression of law. Now Christianity professes to come into the world to deal with this abnormal phenomenon of sin or moral evil and its consequences, and deals with them by a procedure necessarily above nature or law, a process supernatural and abnormal, because sin itself is preternatural and abnormal. Under these views Independency has suffered, and is likely to suffer, comparatively little

from the Broad Church contagion ; a consequence, I will venture to say, of its better knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and of the more serious habits of criticism handed down to us by tradition from our fathers. The merit does not belong to ourselves so much as to the method of our training.

Our founders and leaders from the Reformation onwards held the fundamental principle, laid down by St. Paul and the other apostles of Christ, that spiritual qualifications are indispensable for handling a spiritual revelation, and that this spiritual perception is by far the most important element in a valid exposition of Scripture. They held it for an indubitable maxim that the pertness and profanity of a mind hostile to God in practical life insure the judicial infliction of blindness whenever such a mind presumes to handle the records of redemption.

There is perhaps no more marked characteristic of our democratic time than a certain popular irreverence, stimulated by the abundance of public discussion and of comic literature. Scholars, when they are unconverted men, and critics of the Scripture, when they have not been anointed by God, easily reflect the hard and defiant temper bred of such prevailing influences ; and men who have, on assumed scientific grounds, reached a condition of preliminary unbelief, naturally express it in the tone of their biblical criticism. Thus it has come to pass that there has arisen in England, as in Europe, a school of writers on the Bible who, from the lack of "the faculty divine," are as incapable of handling rightly spiritual things as would be, in his department, an art-critic destitute of eyesight or of the sense of colour. Such is the holy nature of that Divine revelation which is enshrined in the sacred oracles, that it is vain for men of mere technical ability or literary sharpness to reach or even to touch their hidden glories. Not a few of the leading lights in

the newer Broad Church party, men who have lived amidst a brilliant display of historical and linguistic learning, have evinced almost as little spiritual perception as might have been expected from so many heathen, and their internal alienation from "the life of God" accounts for the quality of their critical conclusions.

Take the crucial example of the controversy on the fourth Gospel. When all has been said that can be said on either side on philological grounds, for and against its Johannine authorship and consequent apostolic authority, there remains to be considered the moral position taken by those who support its post-apostolic origin—a point in the discussion where the spiritual faculty, present or absent, decisively turns the scale. Here is a book clearly professing to be "written" by St. John, the disciple of the Lord—yet in real truth it is, as we are told (by these critics) the work of the second century—the work of a man, or men, willing to pass off, as the work of St. John, the invention of a later generation—capable, therefore, of deceiving mankind on the most sacred themes—capable, that is to say, of the most impious of frauds, a "pious" one. Under this hypothesis read the gospel through again, read the report of the discourses and conversation of Christ during the Last Supper, that most soul-moving of all recorded discourses of men, with death in immediate view. I venture to affirm that a man who can maintain that the writer of those three chapters in the fourth gospel was an impostor, or personator, or forger of documents, is capable of believing anything, or of resisting any evidence, from sheer destitution of spiritual faculty.

The traditions of Nonconformity have for the most part defended it from these illusions. Those traditions have favoured the blessed union of obedience to Divine authority with freedom of inquiry and honest liberty in criticism. There has been strenuous intellectual move-

ment amongst us ; long may this freedom continue. "Let truth and falsehood grapple." There is no more open and wind-blown threshing-floor of ideas and theories in the world than English Independency. And we have our own reputed "heresies." But heresies are of two genera—those which aim at the rejection of Divine revelation, and those which aim at interpreting it ; and to classify them together is as misleading as to classify together under one name the early Broad Church and the new—the "clean beasts and the unclean" of the ecclesiastical Noak's Ark of Anglicanism. With rare exceptions the leaders of such movements have not been mere destroyers and sceptics—they have been constructive thinkers and theologians. Above all they have professed, even amidst the most stiff-necked assertion of individual conviction, devout obedience to the authority of the apostles of Christ, yielding an unquestioning submission to their rightly interpreted discourses. They have maintained that all the reform needed is a partially amended interpretation of the authoritative record. Freedom with us has not generally taken the form of abolishing authority, much less of abolishing the Gospel, but of careful interpretation. It is this which places an unbridged gulf between the newer Broad Church and the theological movement in Independency.

We see around us in Christendom, on one side a religion which is so much enslaved to the past that no room is left for progress or reform ; on the other side a religion which is so purely an intellectual exercise that it becomes hard and contemptuous in its tone. The spirit of reverence is never safe from superstition unless it be mingled with a spirit of earnest criticism and inquiry. The spirit of inquiry is never safe from scepticism unless the light of its eyes be the light of God's presence shining around the soul. We see before us in Europe each of these influences working its evil way to the uttermost ;

reverence worshipping on blindly, till it falls down before stocks and stones, old tawdry bambinos, and staring jewelled images of Mary and the saints departed; before contradictory propositions, and, finally, before a hierarchy whose beginning is lost in the thick darkness of Teutonic barbarism. On the other hand, we see a criticism which deals with the Bible, much in the same temper as a lion or a tiger tears a bullock to pieces in the wilderness. For many generations English Nonconformity has maintained a predominant temperament of reverent inquiry, and of inquiring devotion, amidst circumstances which favoured the development of both. Hence its leading adherents united an enthusiasm for the Divine service with a fixed determination to believe only upon sufficient evidence, and to study the truth undaunted by the terrors of human authority; being verily persuaded that, as God has reserved so many mysteries to break forth from the depths of nature in these latter days, so there is still something more to be learned from "the lively oracles." It was a precious combination, and I can form no higher aspiration for Independency than that it may become increasingly independent and, if you like, original in biblical criticism; that is to say, not always waiting, like the humble dog, to snatch up the crumbs of scepticism which fall from the Broad Church table, but asserting, on the basis of a scientific, a spiritual, and a common-sense exegesis, a divine commission to teach positive truth to the nation, a truth learned at "the Fountain itself of heavenly radiance."

One most singular theological characteristic of our time is that men have come to be more angry with the excessive strength and measure of your belief than with its subject. You may hold what opinion you please; only you must hold it tolerantly, as a disputable hypothesis. You may hold a dogma; but you must not hold it fast,

or stoutly deny its opposite, for that is to be dogmatic, and that of course is folly.

Now this lofty "know-nothing" philosophy is the result of good-for-nothing dissoluteness of living, which has relaxed the fibres of the national intellect. Moreover, it is distinctly opposed to the genius of true science, and to the history of all positive discovery. The tendency of steady work in every department is towards solid certainty, and that notwithstanding the abundance of pithless speculations. The Newtonian astronomy has triumphed over the false theories of Ptolemy and Tycho, which once arrested its march. So it has been in chemistry, in physics, in geology, in botany—even in history itself. Progress tends not towards vagueness, but towards definiteness and certainty on solid grounds. So it will prove in respect to the records of Divine revelation. When the methods of inquiry are reformed, when a careful induction is adhered to, when a rational principle of interpretation is fixed, above all when the custom is resumed of more connected and continuous exposition of the Scriptures in the churches, the definite truth of Christ and will of God will be seen in the records of the gospel revelation, and that notwithstanding the forces which at present oppose their triumph. They are rightly called the "lively oracles." For it is no study of fossil theology or palæontology which occupies us. The Bible is alive from end to end. There are many who speak as if the authority of God were nowhere to be found for any doctrine or precept of righteousness. To affirm that it *may* be found is thought narrow, one-sided, intolerant. Each party uses its own "texts," and it is said the use of texts is to neutralize those of the adversary. And so they wrap the Bible up—in grave-clothes—with the fragrant spices of a few fine compliments on its venerable character—"as the manner of the Jews is to bury."

But there is life in it yet—the life of God! And it will rise again after its crucifixion by modern criticism, and “the hour of darkness over all the land,” and its enemies shall behold it. Spite of the positiveness of the great know-nothing party now somewhat in the ascendant, there is a brighter future for the Bible than even its past. It is full of still hidden glories. The Lord hath still “truth to break forth out of His Word.” Its historic graves are fuller of wealth than the palaces of living kings. The sepulchres of Jerusalem contain a richer treasure than the ruins of Troy, or the tombs of Agamemnon and Cassandra. The treasury of David supplies untold splendours to the diligent discoverer. The lost golden vessels of the House of God are there, the pot of manna—symbol of the God-given immortality, the golden candlestick—those Divine realities to which the symbols pointed, and which will last for ever, when their sculptured images on the Arch of Titus, the mark of a brief pagan triumph, have crumbled to dust again.

It is revealed Divine authority which alone can unite us once more, which alone can overawe human perverseness and sacerdotal unreality. That authority, that decisive oracle, can be reached only by consecutive study of the Scripture, can be represented to the people only by consecutive coherent exposition. The nearer we approach to these central oracles, the more deeply shall we feel that the Divine Authority is there, and waits but honest, steady attention to overpower the confused noises of modern sectarianism by the grandeur and sweet majesty of the voice of God. The voice of the Lord is upon these mighty waters, and once heard we can never mistake that Voice for the voice of man.

Independency, then, based upon the New Testament, is founded, as we think, on a rock from which no power can move it. There is no reason for its separate existence

except a spiritual reason, based on a child-like, man-like, godly faith in the Christian revelation. There is no sufficient motive for *dissent* except for the purpose of yielding a clearer, fuller, deeper *assent* to the mind of God revealed in His Son. There is no sufficient motive to the spiritual life as distinguished from the secular, except that which is supplied by faith in definite Christianity; and definite Christianity, we unflinchingly declare, is synonymous with Evangelical Christianity in its substantial outlines. A Christianity, without real submission to apostolic doctrine, is ever ready under the law of the case to die away into Unitarianism, as Unitarianism is ever trembling on the verge of Deism; while, again, modern scientific Deism is always on the point of vanishing in a cloud of Pantheism, or of sinking to the depths of that Ego-Theism which falls down and worships itself, saying, "Thine, O MAN, is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever!"

I shall devote the remainder of this lecture to a brief consideration of the points disputed between the Broad Church and Independency on questions relating to Church life and the State Church. On either side these outward differences spring from profound and irreconcilable differences in things spiritual, and no discussion is of value except that which insists on going down to the foundations.

Again; we simply reaffirm to-day the historical development of Independency, and find no reason to abandon that dearly-bought tradition of truth for the contemporary theories of the Erastian party. The conception which men form of the Church and its place in the world depends on the idea which they have formed of the nature of the individual Christian, or regenerate man; just as a point in motion generates a straight line, a line moving over its own length generates a square, and a

square moving over its own depth generates a cube. If we believe that the asserted regeneration of a soul is a spiritual process, resulting from the action of universal grace in baptism, and always accompanying that sacrament, much more if we believe that regeneration is a mere phrase, denoting no spiritual reality, then you may naturally and logically desire to communicate that lesser or greater blessing in infancy to all the inhabitants of a parish; and every parishioner so baptized and regenerated will be reckoned a proper member of Christ's Church. The area of the Church and of the State will thus necessarily become identical. This is emphatically the position of the advanced Broad Church party. Its whole policy rests on the abolition of the distinction between the natural and the spiritual man in the nation. To them all men are spiritual—all are sons of God, all are endowed with grace, all alike shall one day inherit the Kingdom of God, if there is any Kingdom of God. Under these views the inference is irresistible. The Church is but another name for the State on its moral side and in its Divine relationships. The zeal of Dean Stanley, and of the whole Broad Church party, elder and later, for the union of Church and State, and the comprehension of all Nonconformity in some form of liberal ecclesiastical government, is the inevitable result of primary spiritual principles. All men are "children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven;" what other view, then, is possible than that a separation between good and evil in church life or in policy is impossible? The parochial system, in its broadest extension, is the simplest logical result of the Church of England doctrine on baptismal regeneration in infancy, whether that regeneration be regarded as a spiritual reality by the High Church, or as a mere form and figment by the Broad Churchman. The Broad Church doctrine asserts the solidarity of the race in

spiritual things. All alike are not only the "offspring of God," but the adopted "sons of God"; all alike are in His favour; all alike are destined to eternal life and glory, if, apart from the certainty Christ gives, there is any eternal life and glory. Once assume this principle, and parochial Christianity, with a national establishment of the Church, comprising all sorts and conditions of men, follows as a matter of course. The Christian Church becomes a department of State, like the Home Office or the Treasury.

Independency from the beginning has been based on a wholly different conception of the regeneration of the individual, of the relation of mankind to God, and of the nature of the Church; and this conception is insisted on as alone consistent with Divine Revelation or positive fact.

For, notwithstanding the community of the human race in all its conditions of temporal being, in its common origin, in its physical, intellectual, and moral unity, the spiritual classification of mankind found in the authoritative record of the Divine Revelation is, without one exception, simply and invariably dualistic. The prophets of God, and the apostles of Christ, and the Son of God Himself speak of the righteous and the wicked as of creatures differing not superficially but in the root-principle of their being. He who unites himself to God belongs to a wholly different genus of beings from him who refuses God. He becomes "a partaker of a Divine nature." We find not even a trace of the new Broad Church mode of regarding humanity, in which men discern only moral shades, and deny the existence of distinct colours in character. This lenient estimate of the evil, and lowering estimate of the good, which makes all of one blood, united by a moral consanguinity, and in itself so demoralizing, is resolutely rejected in the teaching of Christ, appointed to

"judge the world in righteousness." In the Old Testament we find everywhere the "righteous and the wicked" only, as a classification exhausting the population of the world. In the New Testament this distinction is re-affirmed and accounted for. Christ Himself asserts a supernatural cause for the distinction, which He treats as generic, and as unaffected either by the better qualities of "sinners" or by the inferior qualities of the good. He declares to Nicodemus that some are "begotten of the flesh" only, others are "begotten of the Spirit." He declares that the latter alone are "sons of God," and inheritors of the heavenly kingdom. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "Verily I say unto you, Ye must be born again" (John iii.). His apostles persist in the same classification. With St. Peter, some "are born again," others not; some are "the people of God," others not; some are the "righteous," others the "ungodly and sinners" (1 Peter i. 23; ii. 10; iv. 18). With St. John there is the man who is "born of God," and the man who is not of God; the man who "abides in death," and the man who has "passed from death unto life;" the man who "walks in the light," and the man who "walks in darkness;" the man in whom "eternal life abides," and the man in whom it does not. There is the "world that knows not God," and there are the "sons of God who know Him" (1 John ii. 5). With St. Paul there is the "soulical," or animal man (*psuchicos*), and the "spiritual man" (1 Cor. ii.); the "old" man and the "new;" the old creature and the "new;" the "earthly man" and the "heavenly" (1 Cor. xv.); the man who "sows to the flesh," and the man who "sows to the Spirit" (Gal. vi.); the man who "has the spirit of Christ," and the man who "has not," and therefore is "none of His" (Rom. viii.). The Pharisaic threefold partition of mankind into

sinners, the moderately righteous, and good is unsanctioned by the apostles of Christ, much more the quite modern classification, which regards humanity as a unit, with principles of spiritual good and evil acting in every man. The Bible maintains throughout the generic distinction between the good and the evil; and the Old Testament ends by declaring that whatever difficulty there may be at present in distinguishing the two, in the end the essential difference will appear. "Then shall ye come back, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves the Eternal, and him who serves Him not. And the wicked shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I do this, saith the Lord" (Mal. iii. 18; iv. 3).

This psychological doctrine of the Bible, recognized as true in actual life, lies at the foundation of the idea of the Church in historical Independency. A local church is not parochial and territorial, comprehending all the inhabitants supposed to be regenerate by baptism in infancy, but it consists of those alone who reveal a personal union with Christ by faith, and confession of it, and who agree and desire to restrict the fellowship of the Church to such as are capable of fellowship, by obeying the commandments of God. Hence a confession of individual faith, a consistent life, and a "godly discipline" for the rejection of open offenders, is of the essence of spiritual independency. Immediately that it yields to the Broad Church blandishments, forgets the spiritual law of its constitution, and commences rivalry with a double or treble faced Anglicanism for the adhesion of the mixed population of a neighbourhood, it sacrifices the *raison d'être* of its existence, abandons the dignity of its Divine commission as a witness for Christ, and sinks into the shabby mimic of a national system whose outward pomp and splendour it can never equal. It will be well if our present

celebration shall result in directing renewed attention to these ancient principles ; if the Jubilee trumpet shall bring back all the churches to their ancient inheritance of apostolic truth. The chief danger of modern Independency is not from without but from within ; from a disproportionate attention to the reform of the world and its churches, to the neglect of self-reformation ; the result being sometimes a certain turbulence of tone, along with shallowness of spiritual conviction and experience. Extension gained by the loss of spiritual depth is but the breadth of a pestilent morass. Of all revolting types of modern religion, Independency, aping Broad Church Anglicanism and seizing upon orthodox endowments, is the meanest and the most immoral.

Moreover, no mere theory of church-life will avail to withstand the tide of opinion now running in favour of all-comprehending Churchmanship. The great world has become religious as well as scientific, and is resolved on refurbishing Christ's religion according to its present tastes. Bunyan's image of the Flatterer, "the black man in the white robe," is the very type of the teachers whom men are "heaping to themselves" in order to maintain the attractions of Christianity without the Cross. Against this overwhelming current nothing is strong enough to stand except a sacrificial life in real earnest. There is no escape for the faithful soul from popular disfavour. "*Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.*" If Independency ceases to be spiritual it becomes effete. If it is spiritual, it must partake in the moral incomprehensibleness of Christ and of God, Who is the most misrepresented of all beings. The Cross, which was in Roman times practically a combination of the rack, the pillory, and the gallows, is the badge of true Christianity. Those who are not ready for social crucifixion are as much aliens from historical Independency as they are from

apostolic Christianity. Christ is still the "rejected of men." It is simply impossible to render Christianity acceptable to a whole nation except by largely corrupting it, and this is precisely what the new Broad Church doctrine seems to effect. It strips the sackcloth from the "witnesses," and clothes them in purple and fine linen, it seeks to embrace Elijah and the prophets of Baal in one hierarchy, it assures Baal-worshippers of final impunity, and it constitutes Ahab and Jezebel heads of the visible Church, in the name of God, comprehension, and unity.

But the thing is spiritually impracticable, for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The front which He turns towards nationally-established Pharisaism and Sadduceeism any man may plainly see in the four gospels.

The distinction between the modern Broad Church doctrine and Independency in the sphere of ecclesiastical morals and politics appears, if we may employ the simplest terms, to be identical with the relation between righteous and injustice. Christendom furnishes no more flagrant example of trifling with solemn language than the recent conduct of some sections of the English hierarchy in dealing with subscription to the standards of the Church. They have ceased to believe in all the leading doctrines of Anglican theology, and yet they subscribe to "the doctrine" as a whole, in order to maintain the privileged position given by the Establishment. It is an indefensible iniquity. It is setting to a nation of traders the clerical example of verbal legerdemain and equivocation in contracts. Nothing more need to be said than that Independency has for ages protested against such criminal procedure, and has endured the consequences of its fidelity to conscience since 1662 in a social ban, which is at once a disgrace to English society, and the true

glory of those who have suffered shame for Christ's sake.

In its political aspect as the chief defender of establishments in religion, the party now referred to deserves, I think, as little of our admiration as for its moral influence. Justice, the true religion of States, requires as its first condition that all subjects should be dealt with on one rule of equality by the law, that there should be no groundless favouritism, no fancy monopolies, no expenditure of public money on a party, religious, æsthetic, or commercial, just to please that party; and, above all, no setting up as portions of the population in positions of privilege, on the ground of taste, colour, or creed, which will tend to produce in the excluded or depressed sections a sense of injustice and social wrong, to inspire jealousy, and to weaken their attachment to the commonwealth. For this is the nature of all sectarian monopolies. They tend to excite an offensive arrogance in the favoured party, tempting them to flout or to patronize the adherents of other systems, as if they themselves were a sort of spiritual *noblesse*, to awaken animosities in the persons excluded from social distinction, and thereby to strengthen unduly attachment to their own sect or party, often to the great danger of social harmony, and of general allegiance to the sovereign State.

Of this system of social injustice the Broad Church clergy of our time are the leading advocates and the foremost upholders. And their special mode of defence is characteristic of men who, having lost their own faith, would like to maintain the advantages of their national position by requiring the sacrifice of all that other Christians hold to be most precious. Nearly to a man they are for the abolition of subscription, so as to break down the boundary walls of the English Church, and to receive all

churches into one comprehensive national ecclesiastical institution.

How such an absorption of the churches into one vast ecclesiastical system would work in the higher regions of the hierarchy, or how such a plan would work in the parishes where the different opinions in religion would be brought into close contact and collision, is not explained. What is clear is, that the project would tend to the further aggrandizement of clerical authority and power, the last thing to be desired in the interests of English religion. We have already 20,000 clergy supported by the State. We might then have 40,000 ; and this would be too many for the interests of genuine Christianity. Nothing is more fatal to national thoughtfulness, national freedom, and national reform, than the existence of an immense body of endowed clerical officials, bound together in one hierarchy ; and so vast a body of clergy as would exist under any scheme of comprehension would literally suffocate the intellect of the country. Egyptian intelligence was dwarfed by its organized priesthood. Greece was intellectually free because its priesthood was Independent and wholly unorganized. Our own Ministers would probably be corrupted into priests, and the regular priesthood, when Nonconformity was abolished, would gather courage for every conspiracy against intellectual freedom.

With all their many and great accomplishments, how little do the writers of whom we are speaking know of the inner life of any religious party except their own. It is part of our present business to assure them that, so far as the Nonconformists are concerned, they are building their hopes upon the sand. If *they* have learned little from the last four centuries of conflict, misery, and disgrace to the cause of true Christianity, occasioned by the State Establishment of religion, we have learned by sad experience a great deal. Where is the body of ministers of

Free Churches in England who would demean themselves to become the pensioners of the State under any scheme of comprehension, just for the purpose of preventing the downfall of that political institution which, notwithstanding all the good done by good men within its limits, has wrought so much mischief during ten generations? The men amongst us who, like the soldiers at the sepulchre, would thus "take the money and do as they were taught," are men who would make no scruple of conformity under existing conditions of subscription. The Ministers of God who have thought it worth while to incur and endure the life-long disparagement involved in separation will not thus sell the birthright of freedom for a "mess of pottage"—not even when it is offered by the State, and accompanied by its blessing. But when it is offered by the Church of England—when it is offered by a clergy whose ancestors have so often persecuted New Testament Christianity as we understand it, in one way or other, ever since the Reformation—and especially when it is offered by men who, having reached the last limits of elasticity in language in the interpretation of their own standards, and thereby brought equal confusion into theology and morality—suppose that others, too, may easily find excuses for flinging aside the remembrance of their forefathers, the experience of ages, and their own unswerving witness against both sacerdotal superstition and a Christ-denying scepticism—and all with a view to silence that testimony by Church union with principles which we believe to be pernicious errors—we say frankly, "Win all whom you can by such proposals. There are those who may gladly eat of these 'broken fragments which fall from their master's table' at the conclusion of the feast; but, as for us, thank Heaven, we do not stand in any need of such a diet, for we eat the 'Children's bread' at the table of the Great King!"

Briefly, every scheme of comprehension, whether by

concurrent endowment or by modification of the basis of the Church of England, is impracticable. No great party in England desires it. It is the project of a sect of thinkers in difficulties, exceedingly indifferent to theology, who, having whittled away their own creed almost down to a shadow of Christianity, suppose that all other men may be persuaded to enter into a confederacy for saving the Establishment, through fear of being denounced *by them* as bigots and sectarians. For the truth's sake we shall quite calmly endure the infliction. Their own brethren do not desire this comprehension at the expense of our consciences and theirs also. The High Church party does not desire it. The Evangelical party does not really desire it. And above all the Free Churches do not desire it. They have no intention of relaxing their testimony against grave errors, whether respecting the sacrifice of Christ, or the authority of the apostles, since Christianity is nothing if it is not a doctrine of truth; and no intention whatsoever of exchanging a heaven-commanded discipline, in the exclusion of openly "wicked persons," for a merely parochial Christianity. These differences between the Church of England and the Non-conformists unhappily spring from profound diversities of belief on spiritual questions. Ecclesiastical principles are not mere accidental forms of thought, but inferences from higher convictions on the nature of spiritual life. The Archbishop of Canterbury, when asked by one of our most honoured ministers, "whether any joint action was possible in evangelizing the people," truly answered, "No; for you proceed upon the supposition that the non-church-going people require to be regenerated, man by man, but we proceed upon the belief that they are regenerated in baptism already." Between such opposites there can be no formal alliance in church life—the difference goes down to the foundation.

Not the less do we recognize with the late Dean of Westminster the necessity of setting up over all religionists one supreme authority and power, which shall secure to them their equal social rights, uphold the titles to their private trust property, govern by fixed precedents its descent and distribution, as it governs the course of all other property; perhaps some day interfere to prevent the further accumulation of real or personal estate by any of them; and, as far as is necessary, keep the public peace between them by insisting on the maintenance of religious liberty, and a habit of mutual toleration. And that supreme authority, that royal supremacy, in things ecclesiastical, if you so prefer to call it, we shall find in a State which treats all religious bodies with equal favour, and wins the allegiance of all by impartial administration of laws dictated by common interest, and decided by the united councils of the nation. Into such an ark (to use once more the figure of Dean Stanley), not of the Church, but of the State, we all, clean and unclean, are willing to enter with the Broad Church party; but no one section of the menagerie must expect to occupy alone, in the character of "clean beasts," the whole of the upper story.

A few words are all that space permits for the consideration of the chief argument set forth by the Broad Churchmen in defence of the connection of Church and State—that which is founded on some of the supposed consequences of disestablishment.

It is held with passionate belief by them that the destruction of establishments would remove the chief check upon the excesses of religious zeal and clerical fanaticism; would take away an influence which at present offers a permanent resistance to the outbreaks of spiritual intolerance; and would open the way to the foundation of irresponsible ecclesiastical despotisms within the area of

the nation, too strong for the Parliament itself to restrain in their domestic policy, to control in their foreign alliances, or to resist in their local explosions of fury. It is not necessary to our argument to affirm that there are no dangers ahead of this description. Every new form of society brings with it its own advantages and its own perils, not least the form of democratic equality, and perfect freedom in opinion, in trade, and in religion. It is probable that when the bands of State are loosened from the Church, there will be a striking increase of religious activity, both in thought, feeling, and speech, throughout this kingdom; and much of it will not be good. Time must be allowed for national training under new forms of social life. But we will not think so ill of our countrymen as to believe that their long discipline under feudal institutions, and their many past experiences, have not prepared them in this department, as in others, to use wisely the liberty which our new civilization accords. With every increase of power there will be required an increase of conscientious self-restraint and regard for the rights of others. There may be some dangers attending disestablishment of the character described. But there are these encouraging considerations to be taken into account on the other side. The chief incentive to the jealousy and violence of religious bodies will have been removed when you have placed them all on a footing of equality before the law, and deprived them alike of political privilege and power. It is wonderful to observe how much the element of social and political injustice quickens the ability for theological criticism, and the tendency to unreasoning antipathy in the excluded parties; and men will be astonished to find, when there is no political reason for discontent, how much more kindly they will regard each other's peculiarities. The various churches in England have more to learn from one

another than most of them will at present allow, and it may be safely predicted that once placed on a political level they *will* learn of each other, and that even some of them, acting under the law of the selection of species, will make a marriage of it without much delay.

There are, moreover, special circumstances in the condition of English society which may diminish the alarm of all who will attend to them. It would be, indeed, a fearful thing if there were to arise one mighty hierarchy free from State control, rich in ever-multiplying endowments, amenable to foreign influence, inflamed with superstition, revelling in the combinations of spiritual power, before which individual conscience is annihilated, and bringing its forces to bear upon our public affairs, with the unscrupulousness of men who will sacrifice society itself to their notion of the salvation of souls. But it is comfortable to reflect that we shall have at least two or three rival hierarchies, whose pretensions and contests are very likely to end in a strong development of lay thought in the body of the nation. And the more active the clergy become in their combinations for intolerant purposes, the more they will arouse against them public opinion, the antagonism of the scientific and of the liberal press, and the judgment of that great working multitude who are destined to exert so powerful an influence in years to come. The only chance for a great hierarchy, when set free from the State, would seem to lie in their moderation. If they were to try to stifle religious liberty, or to attempt dynastic intrigues, or political alliances with foreign chieftains, or if sovereigns at home or abroad were to attempt intrigues with them, they would soon discover what forces could be set in array against them ; and the nation, warned by its ancient experiences, and knowing that the ultimate defence of freedom is in the right arm of the free man, would understand how to maintain its liberties and its

independence. Whatever the clergy might attempt, there could be on a grand scale little fear from the laity.

Although, therefore, we cannot promise that, under the new system, bigots, persecutors, and intriguers will change their natures, or restrain the effusion of that "poison of asps which is under their lips," or that narrow minds will become broader, or that an easier career will be provided for original thinkers and theological reformers than they have hitherto enjoyed, we hope that the conditions of English life will provide some effective checks against social intolerance, which have not been sufficiently considered by those who have foreseen only evil in the change.

And there is one other element in the religion of England which deserves to be mentioned here, as likely to exercise a growing and beneficial influence in the future—that of the Independent Churches, which have for three hundred years contended for the power of the congregation in the management of their own affairs—an ecclesiastical principle analogous to the precious legacy of Saxon freedom handed down to us in our local municipal institutions. It is not likely that these powerful congregational organizations, embodied in various types of town and city churches, will choose this particular era for growing cool in their attachment to these principles of lay influence, local administration, and steadfast resistance to the overpowering sway of territorial hierarchies. It is far more probable that even in the Episcopal Church itself, notwithstanding Dean Stanley's pleasant scoff at such a consummation, the congregations will insist on possessing some voice in spiritual affairs, and that such ideas will be widely diffused, rather than that England will yield itself up a slave in body and soul to one vast priestly corporation.

In the times that are approaching, then, we find conso-

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X.

CLERICALISM AND CONGREGATIONALISM.

THE crucial question in ecclesiastical as in civil government is, whether the people exist for the rulers or the rulers for the people. The Papacy has decided this point in favour of the rulers, and its history has exhibited a steady and continuous development of the principle of authority. In the State it has produced absolute despotism; in the Church its outcome has been Papal infallibility. It is sometimes contended that the Romish Church is the natural ally of the democracy, and that in the cultivation of that alliance lies its chief hope of maintaining and strengthening its position in the future. That this may be the policy which the Church will find it expedient to adopt, and that with the extraordinary versatility with which the Romish see has always accommodated itself to the ever-changing conditions of society, it will pursue it with considerable success, is probable enough. It has played the same part continually in the past, and if it should fail to sustain it with efficiency again it will be because the people have become too exacting in their demands or too enlightened as to the real character of priestly intervention.

But between Rome and the democracy—that is, between a highly organized and absolute hierarchy, with an infallible chief at its head, and an intelligent people, alive to their own rights and with a full consciousness of their power—there can be no vital sympathy. The people who

look up to a priestly caste as their protectors are those who have not yet attained to the stature of full-grown men, and have neither learned confidence in themselves nor trust in God. They are still but babes, without desire or capacity for self-guidance, and willing to commit both their temporal and spiritual affairs to the hands of men in whom their superstitious spirits see the representatives of God. The unenlightened peasants of the middle ages were made to be the tools of priests, but every year makes it more impossible that the people of the nineteenth century should accept this position. That the democracy, which is exercising such immense power on the Continent, and whose tendencies are, alas! so strongly towards unbelief, will place itself under the direction of Rome, is simply inconceivable. Free men can never long be the allies or the serfs of priests, and priests are so fully alive to this fact that they are always at heart the enemies of liberty and of democratic progress. Monarchs and great statesmen who have ambitions of their own to advance may "go to Canossa," but democracies never.

Rome often does, under the stress of adverse circumstances, espouse the popular cause, and even connive at revolutionary violence and excess. It is her *rôle* always to profess popular sympathies, and by drawing many of her priests from the humblest of the people to cultivate a certain popular sentiment, and to encourage a tradition similar to that which exercised such power in the Napoleonic armies, that the peasant-priest may hide beneath his humble soutan the scarlet robe of the cardinal, or even the tiara of the supreme Pontiff. She will no more hesitate to use the democracy as her tool than she will scruple about throwing it away when it has served her purpose.

Rome, indeed, is the partizan of no special policy. She is neither Monarchist nor Republican, Reactionary nor Progressist, but simply Papal. So far as governments or

parties are concerned, she adheres to that which best advances her own interests. When the State is hostile to her, she cares not whether it be autocratic or democratic; for with her political principles and theories are always subordinated to Church policy. She has inherited from the grand republic of former days one established maxim, and carries it out without regard to consistency or principle. In the fierce struggles of the Reformation period she did not hesitate to array herself in opposition to Catholic sovereigns, when the interests of the Church seemed to require it. She knows no distinction between autocracy and democracy. She could even become a patron of communism if so she could promote the selfish ambitions of the hierarchy. As little does she know of gratitude as of principle, and the power whose system of government is most in accord with her own ideas, and to which, in former times, she may have been indebted for valuable help, will be ruthlessly struck down, if the interests of the Holy See should seem to require. *Ne quid detrimenti ecclesiae capiat* is the one law which, at all costs, must be maintained. Her policy may—nay, must—therefore be subject to violent fluctuations; but the spirit of her rule never varies. Her government is the representative, in the Church, of absolute monarchy. Cardinals in the Curia have their influence, just as even in the councils of Imperial Russia the power of great ministers may be felt. Perhaps even the public opinion of the Church may count for more than is generally understood. But the Pope is the absolute ruler, and he rules as the head of the clerical order, which has arrogated to itself the functions of the Church.

II.

At the opposite pole is the Congregational system, in which the people are everything—which does not recog-

nize a clergy, but simply a ministry—which knows only diversity of office, and not distinction of order—which has pastors, teachers, and leaders, but in which even they are but servants of the Church for Jesus' sake. It is intended to develop to the fullest extent the idea of a spiritual democracy—that is, of a society composed of Christian men, in which there is a perfect equality of right. That equality itself is the product, not of some theory of inherent right, but of the common and direct relation of every soul to Christ, which is the root idea of the system. Every true member is equally near to Christ, bound by the same law, and enjoying the same privileges. If there are diversities of ministrations, yet all are under the control of the same Lord. In Christian as in all other societies, influence will no doubt centre in individuals, but it comes as the result of personal character and service as recognized by the free voice of the Church. Office has its own functions and rights, but such distinction as thus exists is created by the action of the people themselves. The underlying idea is that ministers exist for the Church, not the Church for the ministers, and that all are alike bound by their common obligations to Christ.

The true ideal of Congregationalism may be expressed in a phrase as being the pastors for the Church, the Church for the pastors, and all for Christ. It is opposed not only to the dominance of a sacred order, but it denies the existence of such order altogether. The distinction even of its leaders is that they *serve* in holy things. They lose nothing of the true dignity which attaches to their office because they are deprived of the factitious splendour with which human traditions and devices have surrounded it. The Master has said that he who would be greatest must be the minister of all, the servant of all, and they reach the highest type of greatness who thus fulfil His ideal. This is the principle on which Congregationalism is based. It

acknowledges no sovereign in the Church but Christ Himself, and it holds that in the administration of Church affairs all are alike subject to Him and equal with one another. Office has its duties, and is certain everywhere to command sufficient authority ; it needs to be checked when it pretends to inherent right or grasps at absolute supremacy. The pastor is meant to be a guide and a leader, but still he is one with the community over whom he is placed, and in no sense a member of a separate caste or a lord over God's heritage.

III.

It needs nothing more to show that these are two antagonistic ideas. Between the extremes lies the entire region of ecclesiastical territory, in which the two opposing principles are intermingled in different proportions. Clericalism may be the dominant idea of systems which, nevertheless, seek to hold it in check by some plan for securing a popular element in the government of the churches. On the other hand, in churches where the right of the Christian commonalty is recognized, a break-water may be erected against the excesses of democratic feeling in the establishment of some form of clerical authority. How far it may be possible, or necessary, or desirable to introduce these checks on the assumption and arrogance of clerical ambition on the one hand, or on the waywardness and extravagance of popular sentiment on the other, is a point on which it is not proposed to dwell here. There are those who are able to find satisfaction in such expedients, and it is possible these nice adjustments have their own place in the economy of the Church. The intention of this lecture, however, is to compare the two antagonistic systems ; to show how far Clericalism has departed from the original idea of the Church ; to give a brief sketch of the evils it has wrought ; and to insist that the only

effectual mode of emancipating Christendom from its ruinous influence is by a return to the primitive idea of the Church.

It is possible that such restoration of the scriptural pattern would involve the abandonment of many venerated traditions and cherished prejudices on the part of Congregationalists as well as others. My desire is not to exalt a particular "ism," or to extol a church or body of churches, but to exhibit the relation of Christendom to these contending principles. Christianity must cease to be identified with Clericalism if it is to recover the ground which has already been lost even in this country, and still more on the continent of Europe, and if it be necessary to this to purge even Congregational practice of things which are inconsistent with the spirit of New Testament teaching, it must be done. It is the theory of a certain High Church school that the Reformation was intended to vindicate the independence of bishops as against the pretensions of the Pope, and the independence of the clergy as against the usurpations of the bishops. Even the Reformation was intended by its more resolute promoters to go further than this; but whatever it may have accomplished there is assuredly need of a still more complete Reformation, one which shall assert the inalienable prerogative of the Christian people; which shall maintain that they, and not the clergy, are the Church; which shall clear the original pattern of the Church, as set forth in apostolic teaching and precedent, from the accumulated rubbish by which for centuries it has been obscured, and present it to the world in its pristine simplicity and beauty. Our own belief is that Congregationalism has come very near this point, if it has not absolutely reached it; but if there linger in it some remnants of the old evil, they must be cast out. It has a scriptural theory, and the practice must be brought into correspondence with it.

Christianity must be freed from all complicity with the ambition, the arrogance, the superstitions, and the crimes of Clericalism if it is to assert its supremacy in this age. It cannot be denied that Clericalism is the most hated name on the continent of Europe, and that Clericalism is regarded by the passionate champions of democracy, who regard it as their one deadly foe, as synonymous with Christianity. This point is sometimes urged, but with singular maladroitness, by those who would have earnest Protestants make common cause with the reactionaries of France and other countries against the democratic party as the enemies of all religion. The Pope and his supporters are, naturally enough, fond of representing themselves as the defenders of the primary truths of all religion against the enemies of Divine authority as well as of social order, and there are some weak enough to be moved by the appeal. These clerics are so far right that the men who declaim against the Church do not mean by that only the Church of Rome; that the "clericals" whom they detest are not simply the priests of the Holy See; that religion itself, and not any particular form of it, is the object of their abhorrence; and that the Christian ministry of all names and all churches are included in their unsparing condemnation. There are exceptions. There are ministers of Christ who have proved themselves true and enlightened friends of the people, even while they have maintained their loyalty as servants of the truth; who have shared in the struggle for democratic rights, while at the same time they have wielded an influence which has corrected democratic excesses; who have not been ashamed of the popular standard, even though there have rallied to it men whose religious principles were to them an abomination. Such Christian teachers—Pressensé is an example—are not comprehended in the fiery and passionate anathemas pronounced on clericals; but these are the few. It cannot be

doubted that their religious work is materially hindered by the prevailing hatred of the order, and of the influence of which it is supposed to be representative. The value of that work it is not easy to over-estimate. They show the people that there may be a Christianity without priest and without prelate, and that is at once popular in its sympathies and beneficent in its influence. The Church must regain the spirituality, the purity, the brotherliness, and the freedom of early times if it is to be the Church of the people.

IV.

That the hierarchical Church even of the fourth century had little resemblance to that of the New Testament all honest ecclesiastical historians will admit.

The late Dean of Westminster has pointed out with characteristic candour and clearness the extraordinary contrast between the Church of the Apostles and the Church of the Fathers even in the early centuries. "No other change," he says, "equally momentous has ever since affected its fortunes, yet none has ever been so silent and secret." Between the Church as it was at Antioch when Paul and Barnabas were sent forth on their missionary work, or the Church at Ephesus, when the last survivor of the apostolic band was dwelling as a sacred Nestor in the midst of the brethren, to charm them with his sacred memories of the days when the Lord was on the earth, to instruct them by his counsels, or pronounce on them his apostolic benediction, and the Church as it became under Constantine, there is, indeed, so wide a gulf fixed that it seems difficult to understand that the one can in any sense be the successor of the other, or that there can be any vital connection between them. The mystery is hardly lessened by those dim and uncertain records which are preserved to us of the intervening period. That period, in the view of Dean Stanley,

"Is not so much a period for ecclesiastical history as for ecclesiastical controversy and conjecture. A fragment here, an allegory there; romances of unknown authorship; a handful of letters, of which the genuineness of every portion is contested inch by inch; the summary examination of a Roman magistrate; the pleadings of two or three Christian apologists; customs and opinions in the very act of change; last, but not least, the faded paintings, the broken sculptures, the rude epitaphs in the darkness of the catacombs—these are the scanty, though attractive, materials out of which the Church must be reproduced, as it works its way, in the literal sense of the word, 'underground,' under camp and palace, under senate and forum—as unknown, and yet well-known,' as 'dying, and behold it lives.'"—*Eastern Church*, xxxvii.

What we learn from the glimpses we can get of the internal history of those days of struggle is that fluctuations in the character of the Church were, for the most, parallel with the alternations in its external condition, and were in an inverse direction; that prosperity early began to corrupt the simplicity and purity of the original institution, and that although persecution again and again supplied a partial corrective, the advance in numbers and worldly influence, which was only interrupted for the time by occasional reactions and outbursts of pagan violence, meant a distinct sacrifice of the spiritual idea on which the first churches were established.

When we reach the time of Constantine the revolution is complete. There were even worse developments of the evil yet to follow, but the germs were all there. The contrast in external condition is great. The Church of the serf and the peasant has become the Church of the emperor and the noble. Its ministers, professed successors of those who had been the "scum and offscouring of all things," are among the honourable of the earth, finding their way even into the closets of princes. Its recruits, once chiefly collected from the homes of the poor and oppressed, are now gathered from the Cabinet, the Court, the Army; its home, erstwhile in dens and caves of the earth, is in palaces and lordly mansions; and year by year it is piling

up its treasures and adding field to field for the increase of its already vast demesnes. The Church of the catacombs, with its heroic missionaries, its unflinching confessors, its devoted martyrs, has become the Church of the Roman Empire. Kings have become its nursing fathers and queens its nursing mothers. The Church which once was an object of contempt to a provincial magistrate, now overshadows the august majesty of the Cæsars. It has emerged out of its early obscurity, and its history, to use again the words of Dean Stanley, "becomes once more the history, not of an isolated community, nor of isolated individuals, but of *an organized society incorporated with the political history of the world.*"

Those closing words, as significant as they are true, suggest that the change in the internal character of the Church had been at least as great as that in its outward fortunes. It had been transformed from a private society (to use a modern phrase) into a great political institution. Instead of little companies, each complete in itself, and seeking to work out the will of Christ within its own limits, we have a powerful corporation, resembling to a large extent the States of the world, and unconsciously passing through the same changes—the little spiritual republics being first absorbed into the world-wide confederation, which is ultimately to pass into an imperial despotism. In this community the great law of Christ, "He that would be greatest among you, let him be the minister of all, the servant of all," has been wholly forgotten, or if observed in the letter is trampled underfoot in its spirit. The clergy have already become the Church, and the one duty of the people is to submit and obey. The idea of the "household of faith" has perished, and instead of it we have an imposing hierarchy, with its gradation of ranks up to the bishops and archbishops, in whom authority is vested and by whom rule over the Church is exercised.

They are the link by which it is connected with the Imperial power which bestows on them dignities and privileges, and through them exercises influence. In short, little remains of the original institution except the name. The Church and the bishop of the end of the fourth century have hardly more resemblance to the Church at Rome, with its bishops and deacons as known to Paul, than the early Roman republic, with its two consuls, chosen out of the body of citizens for their year of service, and returning to their private position when the year was over, had to the world-wide empire at the head of which was the august majesty of the Cæsar, with all the pomp and splendour of the imperial court.

V.

Clericalism had made the change. Other causes had combined with it to produce this result, but it had been the chief factor. The term itself requires explanation. It is not identical with sacerdotalism, for a church may exalt its ministers into a clerical order and make an unscriptural distinction between them and its commonalty, although it does not recognize any mystic grace in the sacraments, or ascribe any special virtue or exclusive right to those by whom they are administered. All priests must necessarily be clerics, but all clerics are not necessarily priests. A Christian minister, instead of pretending to the functions of the sacrificing priest, and claiming to represent the sacrifice of Calvary in the offering of the Lord's Supper, may regard the assumption of such an office as nothing short of sheer blasphemy. The claims of the Confessional he may hold to be a daring usurpation of the prerogatives of God Himself. He may refuse to receive the confidences of the trembling penitent if made to him as in any way representing Divine authority, distinctly repudiate the possession of authority to pronounce the absolution of the returning

sinner, and earnestly insist that to be the director of the sensitive but ignorant conscience is an office no man can rightly assume. His only instrument for influencing men may be the gospel, the only office to which he aspires that of the preacher or pastor; but if even in the discharge of these less mystic, though not less sacred, functions he fancies himself one of a distinct order, fenced round by jealous safeguards which the laity must not pass, the spirit of Clericalism is already at work in him. As soon as the caste sentiment—the idea of a consecrated and exclusive class which secures a certain distinction for its members, whether or not actually filling the office and discharging the work of the Christian ministry—is allowed to have play, the germ of Clericalism is already there.

There is more or less of difficulty at all times and in all systems in resisting the intrusion of this sentiment. It is very hard for men to cherish enthusiasm and devotion to any principle without transferring something of the feeling to teachers and leaders whom they regard as its representatives. Paul and Apollos were only ministers of God, by whom men believed, but those who had received rich spiritual blessings through their ministry were naturally prone to ascribe to them a higher character. And when men of a different calibre from Paul were the objects of this sentiment, the growth of this evil tendency became more rapid and more mischievous.

It is easy indeed to see how, if there be ambition on the one side and devotion, possibly tinged with superstition, on the other, the sentiment which is at the root of Clericalism—the belief in a sacred order who are the representatives of God upon earth—should develop itself. It would not be possible nor desirable here to follow all the steps in that melancholy process of degeneracy which debased the minister of the New Testament into the priest of the Holy Catholic Church. But the influences which

produced it are easily intelligible. The minister became a cleric, the cleric developed into the priest, the priest manipulated the simple teachings and rites of the gospel the better to increase his authority and invest his office with an august and awful sanctity. The introduction of the cleric thus became the transformation and degradation of Christianity. It resulted in a revolution in which the purity of the truth was corrupted, the beauty of the Christian ideal dimmed, the liberty of Christ's people sacrificed by the same act which involved an invasion of the rights of Christ Himself. Christianity with clericalism indeed becomes practically a new religion. The relations it establishes between Christ and the soul are altered, the standard of Christian ethics is lowered, and Christianity is presented to the world in an aspect so strange as almost to defy recognition.

VI.

The most conspicuous and disastrous change was the establishment of the "Holy Catholic Church," than which no error has been more pregnant with manifold mischief and hindrance to the work of the gospel in the world, as certainly none is more alien to the spirit and teachings of the New Testament. Neither in the words of the Lord Himself nor in the letters of the apostles is there the most distant hint of a great corporation which was to define its own limits, and make those limits co-extensive with the kingdom of Christ. Fellowship with Christ was the one condition of admission into the Church, and the Church, composed of those who were thus one in Christ, was complete in itself—a society called out and separate from the world, and guiding its own affairs in dependence on the teaching of its Lord, so fully assured to it in its assemblies. As clericalism grew, another idea of the Church—an idea of the world, worldly—developed itself.

The Church belonged to an Imperial State, and the ambition grew up among its clergy to make it also an Imperial power. The Roman Empire was certainly one of the most wonderful examples of centralized force that the world has ever seen. Its story is instructive, not only as having the thrilling interest of a romance, but also as recording the gradual formation of an organization, unique in the vigour with which it maintained its authority and extended its dominion despite continued changes at the centre. As it had been built up by all variety of genius, so it was administered with consummate skill. Some of the greatest generals the world has known fought on its behalf; some of the noblest deeds of valour that have ever been witnessed were achieved in its defence; and when it had reached its climax, the genius of statesmanship and rule developed itself to a degree which has never been surpassed in the marvellous skill with which all its arrangements were planned, or the unity and energy with which they were administered, in vigour of authority, and in centralized force. It was at the very climax of its strength when Christianity became a power. The spectacle of its unity and commanding force was ever present before the eyes of men growing up to be rulers in the Church, and their ambition was gradually to assimilate the Church to the State. Step by step the work was done, the simplicity and equality of primitive times left behind, and the Church established as an *imperium in imperio*, with bishops and councils as its rulers.

John Milton, like all other great reformers both before and since, very clearly perceived that the root of all these evils which have since grown up was in the clerical idea which transformed the ministers into the rulers of the Church. He says :

"Heretofore, in the first evangelic times (and it were happy for Christendom if it were so again), ministers of the gospel were by

nothing else distinguished from other Christians but by their spiritual knowledge and sanctity of life, for which the Church elected them to be her teachers and overseers, though not thereby to separate them from whatever calling she then found them following besides; as the example of St. Paul declares, and the first times of Christianity. When once they affected to be called a clergy, and became, as it were, a peculiar tribe of Levites—a party, a distinct order in the commonwealth, bred up for divines in babbling schools, and fed at the public cost; good for nothing else but what was good for nothing—they soon grew idle; that idleness, with fulness of bread, begat pride and perpetual contention with their feeders, the despised laity, through all ages, ever since, to the perverting of religion and the disturbance of all Christendom.” *

Milton is right. The contempt of the laity was the first step towards the establishment of a Christian imperialism, of which the bishops were the heads. In the New Testament we find each separate Church complete in itself, and exercising supreme jurisdiction in its internal affairs. The Church at Antioch, young as it was, and composed largely of men who had themselves been trained in heathenism, did not consult the Church at Jerusalem, despite its inherent claims to moral if not ecclesiastical influence from its connection with the apostles; but, having itself sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of its own independent action sent out Paul and Barnabas on the first great missionary enterprise of the Christian world. Clericalism subverted this independency, and established councils of bishops, by whom the law of the Church was laid down. Organization was gradually perfected; creeds were formulated and enforced; councils pronounced as to the relative claims of contending religious opinion, and the bishops who sat in them chose out the Catholics to honour and cast forth the heretics as aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

* Likelest means to remove hirelings out of the Church. Milton's *Prose Works*, vol. iii. 41. (Bohn.)

VII.

This establishment of the Holy Catholic Church was the first hindrance to the advance of religious truth, the first limit to true freedom of conscience, the first breach in the equality of Christians on the ground of their particular opinions. As soon as the idea was once entertained that there is a visible confederation composed of all who obey, that to it belongs the duty of determining truth and excluding from the Church all who do not accept its decision, the Church entered upon a dangerous path, the end of which is in persecution. It is impossible to tell what mischief has thus been done in preventing the clear development and in presenting the truth, which has been learnt in an aspect calculated to repel. Milton, in one of his finest and most suggestive passages, says :

" Truth, indeed, came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape, most glorious to look on ; but when He ascended, and His apostles after Him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the Virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, lords and commons, nor ever shall do till her Master's second coming ; He shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection." *

The Church of Christ, which is here on earth to do its Master's will and to wait that second coming, should especially help those who are engaged in this endeavour to search after the broken pieces and restore the image of Truth. But, on the contrary, as the Holy Catholic

* *Arcopagitika*. Milton's Prose Works, vol. ii. 89. (Bohn.)

Church has assumed shape and acquired authority, its influence has always been employed in the opposite direction, for the repression of free inquiry and for the enforcement of stereotyped formularies of Christianity. Its most characteristic utterance is, "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." This is re-echoed in its closing words, "This is the Catholic faith, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." But what is the Catholic faith? And in the points wherein it differs from that which is termed heresy, who determined which was the Catholic faith and which heresy? There can be but one true answer. The Holy Catholic Church in its councils has determined what is truth and what is error. But of whom were those councils composed, and how were their decisions regulated? The bishops formed the Council, and the majority of the bishops shaped its decrees. Orthodox and heretic are, in fact, only different names for the triumphant majority and the defeated minority. What is worse, that majority was obtained sometimes by shameless intrigue, sometimes by overwhelming force. A general council was very much like a pitched battle, and in it every act that could secure success was supposed to be legitimate. Speaking of general councils, Dean Stanley says:

"If with Armenia and Egypt we stumble at the decrees of Chalcedon—if with the Chaldean and Lutheran Churches we are startled by the language of the fathers of Ephesus—if with the Latins we alter the creed of Constantinople, yet Christendom, with but few exceptions, receives the confession of the first Council of Nicæa as the earliest, the most solemn, and the most universal expression of Christian theology. In that assembly the Church and Empire first met in peaceful conference: the confessors of the Diocletian persecution came into contact with the first prelates of an established

Church: the father of dogmatical theology and the father of ecclesiastical history met for the first time in the persons of Athanasius and Eusebius. The General Council of Nicæa may be considered both as the most significant of all the seven, and also as the most striking scene, the most enduring monument of the Oriental Church at large."—*Eastern Church*, pp. 21, 22.

Yet this very council was itself a scene of turmoil, of unseemly strife, of unseemly deference to imperial authority on the part of the bishops by whom it was constituted. The most important questions in the creed of Christendom were submitted to its decision, and if ever there was a need for the exercise of independent opinion, for calm and thoughtful deliberation, for steady resistance to all external influence, and for careful respect to the objections and scruples of any who, though they might be in a minority, were yet acting in obedience to the teachings of Scripture and of conscience, and as anxious to arrive at the truth as their opponents, it was in the case of the questions on which that council pronounced and of the creed which it definitely proclaimed. Yet even this Council, apparently the most venerated of all, was distinctly lacking in the very qualities for which any assembly engaged in a work so solemn and claiming a character so august ought to have been distinguished. Dean Stanley gives us some graphic pictures which enable us to understand its real temper and the mode of its procedure. Instead of its decisions being regulated by serious and dispassionate argument, they were dominated by the spirit of party, distracted by all sorts of paltry contentions, dishonoured by unworthy intrigues, and decided largely by deference to the emperor. The following is one of the many sketches given by the Dean :

"From this moment the flood-gates of discussion were opened wide, and from side to side recriminations and accusations were bandied to a few without regard to the Imperial presence. He remained unmoved amidst the clatter of angry voices, turning from one side of

the hall to the other, giving his whole attention to the questions proposed, bringing together the violent partizans. He condescended to lay aside his stately Latin, and addressed them in such broken Greek as he could command, still in that sweet and gentle voice, praising some, persuading others, putting others to the blush, but directing all his energies to that one point which he has himself described as his aim—a unanimity of decision. We have it on his own authority that he reckoned himself as one of the number—as a bishop for the time being—and that he took an active part in the discussion. It was probably in this first session that he put a stop to those personal quarrels, of which he had already had the earliest instalment on his arrival on the preceding day."—*Eastern Church*, p. 147.

The Dean's idea clearly was that the one man who preserved temper and judgment in the council was the one who had really no business in an assembly of Christian divines at all. This was Dr. Stanley's favourite notion. The State, in his view, was the proper ruler of the Church, and its interference was necessary in order to secure the rule of wisdom and charity. Perhaps it may be, if the Church is to lose the character of a simple spiritual society and become an organized confederation rivalling the authority of the State itself. In an ecclesiastical assembly such as met at Nicæa the interposition of the Emperor may have been valuable, but it was valuable only because that assembly had in it so little of the spirit of the true Christian Church. Passionate wrangling, fierce excitement, party fights, personal hatreds, unscrupulous strifes for the mastery—these are the characteristics of the greatest of Christian councils.

If these things were done in the green tree, what would be done in the dry? The council at Nicæa, perhaps, on the whole was one of the most creditable of these assemblies, and if it was open to these charges, what must be said of the councils which have not so high a reputation? The truth is, the record of the conflict between orthodox and heretic in the Church is one of the saddest and most disgraceful chapters in the world's story. It began with

this idea—that the great Christian organization, at the head of which is the hierarchy, must lay down the conditions to which all must conform, set up idols in the shape of creeds for all to worship, and establish a law of ritual which all must obey. The decision of the Holy Catholic Church was that certain documents—elaborated and worked out with difficulty, every phrase of which had been fought over—must be accepted by every one who would belong to that Holy Catholic Church within whose pale alone salvation is to be found.

Practically this means that the Church shall be governed by the bishops, and whoever does not yield his allegiance to them and shape faith and conduct to their bidding, must be left to the uncovenanted mercies of God. How has this been reached? Sometimes by violence, often by manoeuvre and intrigue. Accept the ideal of a great council, and nothing can be more beautiful. An assembly of the leaders of Christian thought and work, quietly considering disputed questions in the spirit of broad Christian charity—if it framed any decisions, trusting only to the moral weight of scriptural argument and of personal influence to secure them authority—exhibiting only the general consensus of opinion, and leaving it to work its own way without anathemas or excommunications—has about it something very attractive in conception, whatever it might prove in practical operation. Even such an assembly as this would not be without its dangers, but it is as different as it is easy to conceive from the “Holy Catholic Church” as it is before us in the records of history. That in a very real sense there is such a Church in the world we rejoice to think, but its limits are not identical with those of any outward confederation, and are not to be determined by any human decrees. It would be sad indeed if we could find it only in turbulent assemblies, packed by force or management, and controlled

by the secular authority. Envy, jealousies, and heart-burnings, pharisaic assumption and self-righteous pride, subtle distinctions and dangerous tamperings with conscience, bitter hatred and cruel persecution, desecration of Divine truths and sacred institutions, the neglect of Divine methods of conquest and recourse to human influences of the worst kind, the sanction of the principle that truth is to be settled by numbers, and that, even in matters of conscience, might is right—these are the fruits of the evil Upas-tree which clerical hands have planted in the midst of Christendom. For unity, there is division; for peace, incessant struggle; for spirituality, the worst kind of secularism.

What has been the result? The Church has been divided between the orthodox and the heretic, and the heretic is employed as a term of opprobrium and reproach. And yet it is a term which ought never to be used in this invidious sense by any body of men in judging of others. It can mean only that those who are thus branded differ in religious opinion from a larger section by whom the brand is affixed to them. But to his own Master each man must stand or fall, and God only can determine who is right or who is wrong, and what is the special measure of moral evil attaching to the intellectual error. It is not every error that excludes a man from the kingdom of Christ, and it is not for men to anticipate the final judgment, which can only be in the hands of Him who knoweth the heart. As a matter of fact, the heretics have often been in the right. "After the way which ye call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers," was the noble declaration of Paul. What the Jews called heresy is now the faith of Christendom. The heretic is the Christian. So all down the centuries heretics have been persecuted even to the death though they have only been witnesses to truths which have now

commended themselves to the hearts and consciences of the successors of their persecutors. "Catholics" boast of the "noble army of martyrs," but they were all heretics in their day, and their names have come to be distinguished in the annals of Christian truth and of human liberty because they were heretics. In their heresy they lived, for their heresy they died, and yet that very heresy turned the world upside down, and is honoured by numbers who, uninstructed by the lessons of history, will still invent heresies of their own which may possibly have a similar fate in the days that are to come. The inference is, not that all heretics are right and all who call themselves orthodox wrong, but only that there is no worse test of the truth of an opinion than the number of its adherents, and that the attempt of any body of men to draw lines of distinction between orthodoxy and heresy is an invasion of the rights of others and a usurpation of the authority of God. This is what Clericalism has always done, and in doing it has marred the very character of Christianity itself.

VIII.

Error has always a tendency to extend and propagate itself. Clericalism has set up a false idea of the Church, and this really involves an entirely false conception of the kingdom of Christ and of the Christian character. On its view Christendom is to be measured by the surveyor's line, not discerned by the prophet's insight. A nation or a parish of baptized men is part of Christendom, though the majority of the people give too conclusive evidence that they are not under the dominion of Christ, and have "neither part nor lot" in His heavenly kingdom. Hence we have had missionaries baptizing men in platoons, and fancying that in this way the prediction that nations should be born in a day was at length fulfilled. What

could be more directly at variance with the spirit of apostolic precedents? The apostles baptized men as proselytes who had learned so much of Christianity that they desired to be more fully instructed in the ways of the Lord; but there is not a hint that they regarded baptism as the communication of a mystic and supernatural gift, which made its recipients members of the body of Christ and heirs of His kingdom. A more emphatic condemnation of the whole system could hardly have been pronounced than that in which Paul anticipates and reprobates its cardinal error in his words to the Corinthians, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." With him "preaching the gospel" was the primary and all important work, since it had pleased God by the "foolishness of the preaching" to save them that believe. Baptism he relegated to so subordinate a position that he seemed hardly to remember to whom he had administered the rite. Crispus and Gaius were men of influence and lead in the Corinthian Church, and special circumstances may have induced him to baptize them, and stamped the fact on his memory. Stephanas would seem to have had some personal claims upon his friendship, and he knew that he had baptized him. "Beside, I know not whether I baptized any other, for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." It is simply inconceivable that the apostle could have written thus if baptism had the importance in his view which Clericalism assigns to it; if Christendom could have been extended by a piece of clerical magic; if men were gathered into the Church by an outward ceremony, and not by the persuasive force of Divine truth. Clericalism, indeed, reverses the view of the apostle altogether. According to it, God sends priests rather than preachers. If there are those who can affect men by clear and faithful exhibition of the truth it is well. They have their function to discharge, and in discharging

it they will do good to the world. But above and beyond them is the priest with a more Divine office and a more sacred character. Sacraments, not living truths or holy lives, are the extension of the Incarnation. From the beginning to the close of the spiritual life Christ revives, renews, sustains the soul by His presence in successive sacraments. These sacraments are all to be administered by the priest, and hence he becomes the channel of the Divine grace by which the soul is trained and meetened for the inheritance of the saints in light. The spirituality of Christianity is thus lost amid the vanities, the puerilities, and the delusions of a mere human superstition.

As the natural consequence, we have a degraded view of religion. The ecclesiastical conception of religious character is removed to an infinite distance from that which is developed in the New Testament. "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking," says the Apostle Paul, "but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Here the rite is nothing, the life everything. The observance of forms is judged entirely by the spirit in which it is conducted, and at its best it is nothing if it be not associated with holiness of life. With Clericalism, on the contrary, submission to the Church and its ordinances is the real test of character. Neither purity nor nobility of life, sweetness of temper nor generosity of deed, faith in God nor benevolence to man, avails anything if there be not absolute obedience to the Church; and if this be present, it suffices to cover a multitude of sins. "Hear the Church" is the first and chief of the commandments, and to hear the Church is to obey the priest. Heresy of any kind is a grievous evil, but the essence of its wickedness consists not in its rejection of the truth of

God, but in its revolt against the authority of the Church. If that is confessed, much even of open divergence may be condoned, and of secret unbelief no notice will be taken. But rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and has ever been dealt with accordingly. The grossest of sins may find absolution at the confessional, but for rebellion against Church and priest we have the dungeon or the stake on earth, the fires of purgatory or of hell hereafter. It is thus that religion and morality have become divorced, and the world has been taught that the highest type of virtue is not to be found in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, but in washings and ceremonies, in tithing of mint, and anise, and cummin, in costly offerings to the Church, and abject prostration of the soul before the priest.

The contrast between the characters formed on these two different patterns may be best illustrated by example. Barnabas was a Christian of the New Testament type, and the more closely we study his spirit, the more evident appears his freedom from what we may describe as the "Church" sentiment. In full reliance upon the breadth of his sympathy as well as the soundness of his judgment, he is sent by the Church at Jerusalem to report on the new state of things which had developed itself at Antioch. Men had gone there preaching who were not apostles and had received no apostolic commission, and they had been so little restrained by the influence of apostolic precedent that they had actually ventured to preach to the Gentiles. Nothing could well have been more daring, more unconventional, and more unecclesiastical, unless we except the judgment of Barnabas upon the whole transaction. It was his duty to inquire as to the character of the work, and in discharging it he took the most unecclesiastical course possible. He looked at facts, not at theories; he cared for the spirit, not for the form. He found unques-

tionable signs of the grace of God, and he was glad. Here was a man who had learned the great lesson that the life was more than the meat, and the body than raiment, and he did not disdain to unite himself with the young Church gathered out of heathenism, and in due time to obey its call and become one of its missionaries to the Gentile world. His characteristic feature was that he was a good man of high spiritual character, the formation of which was laid in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the munificent liberality with which he ministered to the wants of the brethren, in the tenderness which he showed to Paul in the days immediately after his conversion, and the self-denying temper in which he, the older preacher, was content to stand behind the new convert so clearly marked out as the great leader of the Church, even in his passing difference with Paul, in which experience proved that he was right, in his more generous estimate of Mark, we have manifestations of a character in which the things that were "lovely and of good report" completed and adorned those that were righteous and just. He is thus in his integrity, in his simplicity and singleness of aim, in his singular graciousness of spirit and demeanour, one of the most striking products of New Testament Christianity.

At the other extreme I place a man who has always appeared to me one of the most characteristic developments of clerical teaching and influence, Philip II. of Spain. He was the pupil of the priests, the saint to whom priests pointed as an example, the devotee of every priestly idea, the champion of every priestly pretension, the sworn defender of all priestly rule. His claims to this distinction are not at all invalidated by the fact that there were occasions when the exigencies of his overweening ambition led him to seek Protestant allies, and when the champion of the Papacy turned his sword against the Pope. Popes themselves had done the same,

and there was no reason why he should not follow their example in subordinating even the claim of the Church to personal ambition. His religion had never taught him to crucify his ambition any more than to sacrifice even his fouler lusts ; and though it had educated him in devotion to the Church, it was not surprising that when this came into collision with a nature originally passionate and domineering, and made still more so by the flatteries of others and its own self-indulgence, the claims even of the Church had to yield. Hence the man who was notorious for the narrowness of his bigotry as for his ruthless cruelty, whose zeal for the faith spared neither genius nor virtue, who included in his hideous massacres victims of all classes and all ages, whose *auto-da-fè* was nothing better than a ghastly hecatomb offered to Moloch but baptized by priestly hands as a sacrifice to Jesus Christ, could lift his hand against the head of the Church which honoured him as its champion. His proud Armada, fitted out for the subjugation of England, might have been the creation of ambition as much as of religion ; but the wretched policy by which the Low Countries were made to run with blood, and his crown robbed of some of his fairest provinces, was due to his insensate bigotry. Yet the faith which could inspire him to cruelties which have seldom been surpassed, could not restrain him from intrigue against the very Church to which he professed such devotion. And Clericalism could forgive it, and the innumerable sins which lay at his door beside, because he was still ready to crush the heretics—simple-minded, inoffensive, devoted men—whose one fault was that they preferred to serve God rather than man, and cherished a reverence to Christ which forbade them to unite in the idolatry either of the Church or the priest—who were the objects of its special abhorrence.

A more detestable monster is scarcely to be found in

modern history. It is seldom indeed that a man is so utterly abandoned to the power of evil that there is not some redeeming virtue to be found in him. But what there was in the spirit or the life of the monarch who was regarded by the Church as a pattern of saintliness, it is hard to discover. There have been despots whose lack of high princely qualities is said to have been compensated by the presence of personal amiability and the various graces which adorn the home and make the happiness of the family. But this was not so with Philip. In every relation of life there was the same lack of principle, the same unmitigated and brutalized selfishness, the same indifference to the rights or feelings of others, the same unfaltering belief in the Divine right, which priests had taught him was vested in him, to do his own will, and make the whole world minister to his lust and ambition. The historian Motley has drawn a graphic picture of him in his cabinet at the Escorial, where he sat as the centre of a wide-spread machinery of intrigue, all employed for the one object of self-aggrandizement or self-indulgence. From that spot he was communicating with diplomatists who reported the secrets of every court, and were instructed as to the false and treacherous policy they were to pursue; with traitors of different lands who had sold themselves to work his will, even by betraying their country; with spies who watched these dastards lest they should sell the tempter who had seduced them into treason; with Inquisitors who were engaged in the search for heresy, hunting up victims for the massacres by which this despiser of every Divine law was seeking to promote the Divine glory; with pimps and panders who were scattered far and wide as the ministers of lust for one who was the favourite son and chosen champion of the Holy Catholic Church.

IX.

It is worth while to dwell thus on the character of this royal saint, because no one could better illustrate the dishonour inflicted upon Christianity in the degradation of its ethical standard by a Clericalism, which not only exalts ecclesiastical above moral virtue, but treats the absence of the latter as of light importance when there is a full development of the former. All this is independent of the evil fame which Philip II. has won as the most unrelenting and determined of persecutors. This is a second feature in his life which makes it so peculiarly instructive as a practical development of Clericalism. A distinguished Roman Catholic writer has recently told us that

"It is a first principle in the English mind that Roman Catholicism is the standing foe to human liberty. Nor does even a high degree of intellectual cultivation always avail to produce a juster estimate of this religion. Thus Mr. Gladstone, who, of course, cannot be ignorant that the Catholic Church is (in the happy phrase which Mr. Mill quotes from Guizot) 'the parent of liberty of conscience,' has laid it down dogmatically, in a recent work, that Catholicism, being a religion of authority, is incompatible with freedom of thought."*

There could be no more effectual answer to this sophistical plea than the life of Philip II. To talk of a Church which approved of his action against heresy and heretics as the "parent of liberty of conscience" is simply grotesque.

One of the chief sins of Clericalism is that with freedom of thought it has no tolerance. Cardinal Newman, indeed, tells us that

"The Infallibility of the Church is a supply for a need; and it does not go beyond that need. Its object and its effect also is not to enfeeble the freedom or vigour of human thought in religious speculation, but to resist and control its extravagance."†

* W. S. Lilly, in *Contemporary Review*, Feb. 1882, p. 223.

† *Apologia*, p. 253.

But who is to draw the line between sobriety and extravagance? Wherever that power is lodged, there is the centre of intolerance, and no Church which undertakes to repress extravagance by means of the sword of the State or the dagger of the assassin, can be regarded as anything but the deadly foe of freedom.

To talk of the Roman Catholic Church as the "parent of liberty of conscience" is not so much a monstrous paradox as it is a shameless historical misrepresentation. Mr. Lilly says—

"The Inquisition, the fires of Smithfield, Guy Fawkes, the Spanish Armada, James the Second, and Judge Jeffreys, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes—such are the personages and events primarily associated with it from the days of the nursery."

Quite true, and Mr. Lilly himself gives no reason why they should not be so associated. Indeed, the ghastly list might be very largely increased. The Church of Rome, indeed, has not been the only persecutor, nor is the charge advanced as telling against it alone. Wherever Clericalism has inspired men with the idea that the Church has to decide what is truth, and to force all, by such means as the State will place at its command, into obedience to its decrees, there is persecution. The Church of Rome has worked out that idea in the most triumphant manner, but it is not the solitary offender. Our contention is not against that Church alone, but against the principle wherever found, and however mild the kind of persecution which may be adopted. But in the present case we have to deal with the assertion that a Church which has tolerated all sorts of violence and crime, and has inflicted an untold amount of human suffering, is the "parent of liberty of conscience." How far Mr. Mill accepted this epithet of Guizot's appears somewhat uncertain when his words, as quoted by Mr. Lilly, are examined—

"One beneficial consequence which M. Guizot ascribes to the power of the Church is worthy of especial notice—the separation unknown to antiquity between temporal and spiritual authority. He, in common with the best thinkers of our time, attributes to this fact the happiest influence on European civilization. It was the parent, he says, of liberty of conscience. The separation of temporal and spiritual is founded on the idea that material force has no right, no hold, over the mind, over conviction, over truth. Enormous as have been the sins of the Catholic Church in the way of religious intolerance, her assertion of this principle has done more for human freedom than all the fires she ever kindled have done to destroy it."—*Dissertation* ii. 248.

It is worthy of note that Guizot does not say that the Romish Church was the parent of liberty of conscience, though he ascribes that honour to the idea of which it claims to be the exponent and champion. But that idea does not owe its origin to Rome; it was in the world before Rome claimed to be the embodiment of the Holy Catholic Church; it was there before the false idea of Catholicity had come in to mar the purity and simplicity of primitive Christianity. It was the Master Himself who taught it, when He told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." Rome laid hold of the idea and professed to work it out, but she has marred and deformed it, as she has marred everything she has ever touched. There is a fallacy in the use of the term "the Catholic Church" which may be regarded as covering the apostolic Churches on the one hand, and the Romish hierarchy in its most extreme form of development. In this way to that Church may be ascribed the grand idea of spiritual liberty, while its opponents are credited with the sins against it. It is only necessary to discriminate between the Romish Church and those humble spiritual communities of which it represents itself as the legitimate successor, in order to get at the real Church. The principle of freedom belongs to the one, the crimes of persecution to the other.

The gospel of Christ was intended to emancipate as well as to enlighten the human mind, and Clericalism has counteracted that design and presented Christianity to the world as an instrument of tyranny and oppression. Mr. Lilly admits that there is a widespread impression, both on the continent and in this country, that Clericalism is the foe of liberty, and that, in consequence, religion has become involved in the hatred with which it is regarded by liberty. No consequence could be more melancholy, but none more natural. In France, perhaps, more than any other country, the mischief that has been wrought, not only to the Romish Church, but to religion itself, seems clearly apparent. For centuries that Church sowed the wind. For the last century, since the great uprising of the French democracy, it has been reaping the whirlwind, and unfortunately the harvest has been reaped also by those who had no share in the scattering of the seed. French Protestantism has been a sufferer in both ways. The Huguenots, who were shot down in the streets of Paris, who were hunted like wild beasts of the desert, and massacred whenever caught, and who, if they contrived to escape the fury of their persecutors, were forced to seek in foreign countries the security which was denied them in their own, were the victims of the time when Clericalism was supreme in court and cabinet, and by its ruthless atrocities stirred up passions in the hearts of the people, the influence of which remains to this day. But in the reaction of bitter hate which followed, Protestantism, which was the sufferer by the crime, has been involved in the passionate resentment which it provoked. It is a religion, and Frenchmen find it hard to believe that any religion can be free from the original sin of that Clericalism which has always been presented to them as the one authoritative and orthodox type of true Christianity.

Fearful indeed has been the retribution which Clericalism

has had to endure, but in condemning the crimes of the terrible *vendetta* of the Revolution, we must not forget that they were a retribution. The time had come when Clericalism had to stand face to face with an infuriated people whom it had kept for centuries under the yoke of cruel bondage, and there was no class to interpose as mediator or moderator between the avengers of blood and the oppressors, whose hypocrisy had been detected, and whose crimes had aroused this vengeance. In the days of persecution priests had taught the lesson of vindictiveness and given the example of diabolical cruelty, and now their teachings were to be turned upon themselves. There was a religion which would have inculcated other ideas, and which, if it had been allowed to propagate itself, would have reared in France, as it has done in England, a powerful class who have been restrained by the fear of God from a bloodthirsty vengeance. What Puritans have done for this country, Huguenots might have done for France. But they had been trampled under the iron heel of the dragoon or the executioner, and so when the hour of trial came there was no voice coming from an independent community to plead for mercy. The priest and his victims confronted one another; the latter, maddened with the memories of centuries of wrongs, and for the time possessed of a power as resistless as the spirit by which it was guided, was unscrupulous and unsparing. The horrors of the Reign of Terror were the result. Priests had been the tools and instruments of tyrants, and in some sense they were the greatest offenders of all on whom the fierceness of popular passion fell, inasmuch as they had prostituted the sacred name of religion, and perverted that which was meant to be a blessing to mankind into an oppression and a curse. What wonder that they were involved in the common overthrow and shared the common doom! Nothing is more easy than to excite sympathy on behalf of innocent and even holy

men, who met an undeserved fate because they belonged to a hated order. But it is possible to respect their virtues, to admire their heroism, even to believe that they have won for themselves no unworthy place in the noble army of martyrs, and yet to feel that there is at all events some extenuation for the sanguinary vengeance which was exacted by excited men just awakening from the slumber of centuries, who were intoxicated with the sense of their new-found power, and who, finding these innocent men in company with those whose hypocrisy they had detected, treated them as the accomplices of their crimes.

To ecclesiastics who had already degraded the most sacred things, and sometimes even made sport of the most precious truths, it would be a matter of less concern that the revolt from the priesthood rapidly passed into a rebellion against God, and the denial of the authority of His Church became a passionate rejection of all rule in the Universe. Proud and arrogant cardinals, who were distinguished chiefly by the greed of their intense ambition, the tortuous character of their intrigues, the unmitigated selfishness of their lives, the voluptuous luxury of their entire surroundings, had been, in the eyes of the people, the highest ministers of the Church. Bishops who loved the ease, and were not disturbed by the vice of the courts; abbés who were the complaisant confessors of aristocratic ladies of doubtful virtue; priests who had been ever ready to spur on the popular hate of the heretic and to encourage it to deeds of blood, had taught them what they knew of religion. So long as these priests were able to wield the terrors of superstition to alarm, they held an ignorant people in a craven and servile subjection. But when the scoffer and the cynic had done their work, when the ridicule of Voltaire and the seductive theories of Jean Jacques had undermined the very foundation of the popular faith, when unbelief had not only spread far and

wide but was accompanied by a passion of malignant hate, which was hardly less intense than the enthusiasm of faith, the cruel revenge of the Revolution was the result. It was brutal, it was indiscriminating and unrestrained, it was ferocious and unsparing, but even so it only followed in the wake of Clericalism. There is nothing in the story of the Reign of Terror which surpasses in cruelty, nothing which in treachery equals the atrocity of the Bartholomew massacre. The critics who are so ready to denounce the crimes of the democracy should at least not overlook those of the priest. The people were, in a large degree, the pupils of the priests, and in their excesses showed themselves learners with too much aptitude and too much docility.

Englishmen who dwell at ease at home, and are conscious that they could at any moment by a very slight exercise of energy crush an ambitious priesthood, and who in this sense of power are disposed to treat its constant and insidious advances with too contemptuous and optimist an indifference, may reproach French republicans with their bitter antagonism to the priesthood. But, if they would be just, they are bound to bear in mind the attitude which clericalism has always assumed to the popular cause, and still more the singleness of aim and the savageness of temper which it has displayed in its antagonism. There is not a single indication that the spirit which influenced the Church of Rome throughout its entire history is at all changed; that there is any more sympathy with popular feeling, any penitence for the cruelties which have alienated popular sympathy, any disposition to renounce that policy of exclusiveness in which is the germ of persecution. Everywhere the priests are a powerful force in the army of reaction. They hate the Republic, and the Republic feels that it must steadily resist them, and deprive them of the power of working

mischievous. It is, after all, the instinct of self-defence which prompts the action, and it is not evident on what grounds its principle is to be condemned, however we may deprecate some of its modes of action. The saddest feature in the whole is that religion itself is included in the hostile feeling; but even for that Clericalism is mainly reponsible, since it has steadily and consistently sought to exhibit itself as the only representative of Christianity.

Such are some of the evils which Clericalism has inflicted on the Church and the world. France has been selected as an illustration because nowhere has the conflict between the priest and unbelief assumed such portentous dimensions and produced such terrible results. But if it were possible in this rapid survey to set forth the condition of other countries of Europe, where the priest still retains his supremacy, the picture, though it would wear a different character, would be as sombre and depressing. Everywhere Clericalism is misrepresenting the gospel of Christ, and where it does not rouse men to a passionate resistance, is training them in an abject and servile superstition. In the one case it goads them into scoffing and blasphemous unbelief; in the other it educates in a fetichism which is so far worse than that of paganism inasmuch as it is a degradation of the Divine truth—a darkening of the light which God has sent into the world. Nowhere does it nurture true spiritual manhood. Clericalism, says the leading statesman of France to his followers, including the whole strength of the democracy, that is your enemy. And as he speaks, innumerable scenes must rise up to the minds of those who have read the story of their country, in which the system thus denounced has proved itself the foe of the people, and inflicted indelible disgrace on the national name. The darkest pages of the national record are those which Clericalism has traced. Of the crimes by which the story

is disfigured, none are fouler than those committed or instigated by the priest. And yet, when this gospel, from which the priest professes to derive his power, was preached by the Master, the "common people heard Him gladly." It may be long before the people learn to separate between the truth as it is in Jesus and the falsehood by which sacerdotalism has misled them, but when that point is reached, the truth will triumph as of old.

X.

That our own country has been preserved from similar evils is owing mainly to the influence of Puritanism, and of Puritanism in its most pronounced form. The moderate men who desired only to reform the Church, and would have continued within the Establishment had it been so reformed, conceded so much that they had left themselves without any solid ground of defence against clerical pretensions. The only impregnable position of an anti-clerical party is the supremacy of Christ in His own Church, and the direct relation of every member of this Church to Him; and that was the ground taken by Congregationalists from Robert Browne downwards. The rights of the Christian people were opposed to the usurpation of the clergy, and those rights were rested not on any *a priori* theory of the natural equality of all men or even of all Christians, but on the teaching of Christ Himself, the promise which He has given to every society of His followers, and the authority which He has committed to it as acting in His name and under the guidance of His spirit. This was the ground manfully taken and held by those who were branded as separatists or sectaries, and who were hardly less obnoxious to the Puritans and the Presbyterians than to the ardent supporters of the Established Church.

A recent champion of the Anglo-Catholic theory, whose

zeal is hardly according to knowledge, has employed himself of late in the defence of a position which evidently appears to him novel and ingenious, that Congregationalists are the descendants of the Separatists, not the Puritans, and are not Nonconformists but Dissenters. So far as the terminology is concerned his position might easily be disputed. Congregationalists have suffered severely enough for a refusal to conform, which certainly it would be difficult to distinguish from Nonconformity. For a quarter of a century they were subjected to a persecution which was not less intolerant in temper than that of Rome, though the restraints of British law and opinion hindered its action, and prevented the perpetration of such atrocities as those of Queen Mary's time. Up till a very recent time, they have been deprived of the full privileges of citizenship, excluded from the national seats of learning, taxed for the support of a church from which they dissented because they would not conform. The penalties of Nonconformity have thus been vigorously enacted. It is curious that the name of Nonconformists should be grudged them. Yet, strange to say, two articles of a learned Anglican review have been devoted to this work, the contention being that the name has been given by a foolish courtesy on the part of Churchmen.

Congregationalists smile at all this when regarded as a mere question of words. But as to the historic fact, to which this writer is so desirous of giving prominence, they fully agree with him that they "are the direct heirs of the Separatists of history." The idea that they have sought to conceal this, and have, therefore, described themselves as Nonconformists instead of Dissenters, has been evolved out of his own internal consciousness. As a matter of fact the two designations have been used almost indiscriminately, or if a distinction has been made, the former has been regarded as the wider term, including all

who did not conform to the National Church, while the latter has been restricted to those who have a direct connection with some other religious community. We do not, however, require to be taught that we are in more direct relation to the Separatists than the Puritans, nor are we at all ashamed of the connection. Without going to the length of Heylin, whom the Reviewer quotes, though he holds his judgment to be uncharitable, that it was the "more cunning brethren who kept within the pale of the Church," we certainly believe that they were the less logical. Robinson, in a passage cited by the Reviewer, presents very fairly the relation between the two: "Caune quotes 'a saying of King James,' that 'the Puritans are the founders and fathers of the Brownists:' the latter (saith he) only boldly putting in practice what the former do teach, but dare not perform. For what end he wrote this I let it pass, but the words are true. Our separation from the Church of England is by this ground certainly good and lawful, and therefore they say and do not." In other words, Congregationalism is the legitimate development of the principles of Puritanism. If Puritans were not the fathers, they were at least grandfathers of modern Dissent. The Separatists had just reason to complain of them, for by refusing to apply the principles they had laid down, they strengthened the forces of the clericalism or catholicism against which both alike had to contend.

XI.

Anglican historians describe these Separatists as the "anti-church" party. They were really the anti-clerical party, for their one endeavour was to restore the primitive idea of the Church in opposition to the dominance of the clergy. In the case of the Anglican Establishment these clerical or church pretensions have about them a touch

of absurdity. The Church of Rome has age, authority, venerable traditions, a marvellous history, a show of "Catholic" consent in its favour. It is not a thing of yesterday, nor is it a creation of kings or parliaments. Admit its first principle and it will be hard to escape its conclusions. That principle Anglicanism admits, and carries out by employing a few of its divines to lay down the terms of Catholicity and secure authority for them by an Act of Parliament. This was what the Elizabethan, and afterwards the Caroline divines even more boldly undertook. The Acts of Uniformity really determined the conditions of Catholicity. Take the last of them. Where is it easy to find a more pitiable spectacle? Here are a body of men—without special distinction for ability and character, led by a prelate whose narrow bigotry was characterized by a spite against Puritanism and all its works which was feline and feminine, and urged forward from behind by fox-hunting aristocrats and a people in the fury of reaction—who undertake to define the limits and establish the laws of the Holy Catholic Church. The marvel is how they did not see that the very principles of Catholicity for which they contended were fatal to their assumptions. Who were they that they should pronounce the condemnation of a church which, whatever its errors, had on its side overwhelming numbers, whose prelates were found in every part of the world, and were admitted by themselves to be in the true apostolical succession, among whose treasures were the richest fruits of art, to which belonged all the outward symbols of majesty and power, which could boast of an unchallenged pedigree for its hierarchy, and could appeal to the authority of Councils either in the past or in the present in its favour? Could an Œcumenical Council have been called in 1662, the little company of Sheldonian divines would have formed a mere fraction of it. Yet they resolved that in England

they were the Catholic Church, and that all others, whether they adhered to the older faith or went into new paths of thought, were alike heretics and schismatics.

A position more clearly indefensible could not have been chosen. It is raked by a cross-fire, and cannot be defended on one side without being exposed defenceless to a crushing attack upon the other. If its defenders assert the authority of the Holy Catholic Church, they are condemned for disobeying it. If they maintain their right to pronounce as to the Catholicity of the older Church, they become even as other Protestants; and on what ground can they forbid other men or other churches to decide upon their own?

But these Anglican divines, claiming liberty for themselves to condemn Rome, branded as heresy all opposition to the authority of Lambeth. Apparently unconscious of the absurdity of the pretensions, they declared that theirs alone was the Holy Catholic Church in England. They isolated themselves from all other communions. They would know neither Presbyterians, Lutherans, Calvinists, nor Independents. They flouted their claim to be regarded as Christian Churches; they denied the validity of their ministry; they treated them as "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise." Of all the illustrations of that insular exclusiveness with which we are often reproached there is nothing that can compare with these pretensions of our Established Church. It has been charged against Dissenters that their favourite strain is—

" We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground ; "

but this is a reproach that might more fairly be made against this island community which yet fancies itself the Catholic Church, determining what is the true faith, and

resolving that no other shall be allowed in this England of ours.

But if the foundation on which this supposed authority rests is doubtful and insecure, the confidence with which its claims are advanced is not thereby abated. The Pope, with the traditions of fourteen centuries behind him, and the authority of the general councils during that long period in his favour, could not adopt a higher tone than these Anglican representatives of Catholicity. Regarded as schismatics themselves by those who, on their own principles, have the right to determine what schism is, they do not shrink from treating those who will not submit to their rule as heretics who have neither church, ministry, nor sacrament.

The present generation has seen a revival of their pretensions and an extension of their power from which it might have been hoped that the Protestant influences within the Establishment would have preserved the Anglican Church and the country. The "Catholic revival" is the marked feature in the ecclesiastical history of the later part of this century, as the Evangelical revival was the most memorable and characteristic development of the half-century preceding. Between these two how complete a contrast, and that not only in the spirit and outward manifestations of the two movements respectively, but also in the atmosphere which they created. The earlier was a distinctly spiritual awakening. Let men say what they will about its narrowness, its Puritanic severity, its fanaticism, even its severest critics must concede that it was an outburst of deep spiritual feeling, and that its work was a purely religious work. It may be reproached as tending to a weak sentimentalism, as lacking intellectual elevation, as tending to mere pietism, but its deeply religious character and its practical beneficence cannot be denied. The Anglicans of to-day are perfectly justified in their com-

plaint that the influence of the Evangelical movement was distinctly to lower the tone of church sentiment; and though, as a matter of fact, many of the most advanced Catholics of the day were trained in Evangelical circles and educated in Evangelical principles, the Oxford movement was distinctly reactionary, and was, in truth, the endeavour to restore and extend that clerical element in which the Evangelicals had been lacking. The development was perfectly normal. A religious earnestness, as nurtured by Evangelical teachings, and church or clerical sentiment created and fostered by the Prayer Book, have their natural results in the Ritualism of our times.

The "Catholic revival" is simply a revival of Clericalism. There are other elements in it, but these are not its distinctive marks. So far as it has faith, spiritual life, zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of men, it has them in common with the Evangelical school from which, in many cases, it learned them. The authority of the Church, the sanctity of the priest, the value of the sacraments are its differentiating points. Whether the increased prominence given to these be a gain to religion is a question about which there will be little difference of opinion among those who are careful to maintain the simplicity that is in Christ. That in the party there are men of high character and eminent piety, and that in the teaching and works of the school there is much to be admired, would be unjust to deny. But what is worthy of praise is that which is truly Catholic, and is shared by them with all true followers of Christ. What is distinctive of them, and regarded by them as specially Catholic, is nothing less than Romanism, reduced or modified so as to meet the tastes of the English people and the requirements of the English Prayer Book. There are degrees of development in High Anglicanism, the lowest being one which a good many of

the old Evangelical party have already attained, while the highest is only to be distinguished from Romanism in points on which Rome has the advantage both in logic and in historical precedent. In all alike the vital element is Clericalism, its pretensions graduated according to the conditions under which they are advanced, but all alike involving a theory of sacerdotal power which is inconsistent with a true development of the Church of Christ in its full strength and independence.

XII.

There is in our Established Church a development of Clericalism which is wholly different from this, and which, if in some senses less mischievous, is in reality more intolerable and offensive. Its representatives in the respective parishes do not claim to hold a special commission from heaven; they are content to have the position and authority which the State confers upon them. They are members of a privileged order, but its privileges do not accrue from an Apostolical succession, of which, in truth, many of them make very light, but from public appointment. Mr. Matthew Arnold is, perhaps, the most consistent exponent of their rights, and the most cynical critic of those by whom they are questioned.

In his view the parochial clergyman is the one minister who has a right to exist in a parish, while all others are interlopers, whose presence he is entitled to resent. The latter stand to him in the same relations as the courts of the Irish Land League occupied to the ordinary legal tribunals, and if they cannot be suppressed, as these self-constituted magistracies were, are at least open to the same moral condemnation.

“The clergyman—poor soul!—cannot help being the parson of the parish; he is there like the magistrate; he is a national officer with an appointed function. If one or two voluntary performers, dissatisfied

with the magisterial system, set themselves up in each parish of the county, called themselves magistrates, drew a certain number of people to their own way of thinking, tried differences and gave sentences among their people in the best fashion they could, why, probably the established magistrate would not much like it, the leading people in the parish would not much like it, and the new comers would have mortifications and social estrangements to endure. Probably the established magistrate would call them interlopers; probably he would count them among his difficulties."—*St. Paul and Protestantism*. Preface, p. xxi.

This is Erastian clericalism in its barest form, and it is well that those who insist on the value of a State Church should thus see what it really means. It is as exclusive in character, as arrogant in tone, as hard in its judgments as sacerdotalism itself. Indeed, Mr. Matthew Arnold endorses one of the most bigoted utterances of Bishop Wilberforce, and seems to regard it as pre-eminently in harmony with the teachings of the Apostle Paul and the "sweet reasonableness" of the gospel.

"It is not the Bishop of Winchester who classes Dissent full of a 'spirit of watchful jealousy,' with spiritual hindrances like beer-shops—a corruption of the spirit along with corruptions of the flesh; it is St. Paul. It is not the clergyman who is chargeable with offence in wishing to 'stamp out' this spirit, it is the Christian religion."—*Ibid.* Preface, p. xxiv.

The full bearing of this contention may not at once be perceived, but the more closely it is examined the stronger will be the feeling of indignation and disgust awakened in the hearts of all who believe in the spirituality of religion, the sovereignty of conscience, and the personal responsibility of every man to God. Religion is made a matter of State arrangement, and its minister a piece of State mechanism. "The clergyman," we are told, "is the one minister of Christ in the parish who did not invent himself, and who cannot help existing. He is not asserting his ordinary self by being there; he is placed there on

public duty." In other words, he is there not as the minister of Christ, but as a religious functionary placed in the parish by the Government. Why "he cannot help existing" is simply unintelligible. The State has given him the commission, but it was at his own option to accept or decline the office; and if he has seen fit to accept it, he must be prepared for the opposition of those who feel that the action of the State involves something more than the violation of personal liberty, that it is a direct invasion of the rights of Christ Himself.

All this is what Mr. Matthew Arnold is unable to see, or rather what he regards with a supercilious contempt—which detracts very seriously from the beneficent influence of that "sweetness and light" of which he assumes to be the centre—as a mere display of that British Philistinism which has found its home in the Nonconformist churches. They believe in a definite theology, in a supernatural life first given and afterwards sustained by the Spirit of God, in a Church composed of men to whom this life has been given; and therefore, as he is perpetually telling them, they have "a defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and knowledge, a stunted sense of beauty, a low standard of manners." In other words, they are Philistines, and their fancies or prejudices must not be allowed to stand in the way of that *régime* of sweet reasonableness which it is the aim and duty of the State to establish in every parish.

On Mr. Matthew Arnold's theory, conscience is turned into a mere name, and the sacrifices made on its behalf become a senseless blunder. It is hard to say whether he regards "preternaturalism" or "fidelity to conscience" with most contempt, but they are both dismissed with that magnificent sweep of the hand and cynical sniff which are supposed to be decisive of every question. The insufficiency of the Puritan religion

"is now every day becoming more manifest. It deals, indeed, with personages and words which have an indestructible and inexhaustible truth and salutariness; but it is rooted and grounded in preternaturalism, it can receive those personages and those words only on condition of preternaturalism, and a religion of preternaturalism is doomed—whether with or without the battle of Armageddon for which Lord Salisbury is preparing—to inevitable dissolution." *

If effrontery and dogmatic assurance can achieve anything, Mr. Arnold must certainly succeed. Of the infallibility of himself as oracle he knows not the shadow of a doubt, and he increases the severity of a hostile judgment by the sneer with which it is accompanied. His phrases are themselves expressive of scorn, as when he describes as "preternaturalism" what those whom he opposes regard as "supernatural revelation." He proves nothing by this; but then he does not consider that anything remains to be proved. He has pronounced; *lis finita est*. The faith which has a history full of the most sacred and touching memories, which has inspired men's hearts with a heroism which philosophy never kindled, and lavished on "suffering, sad humanity" ten thousand blessings of which philosophy never had a conception; whose story is rich with records of a lofty devotion and a dauntless courage of which the world would else have been ignorant, and which at this hour is a more powerful factor in the highest civilization of the race than science itself—is quietly waved aside by the wand of the great prophet of culture, and disappears for ever. "Fidelity to conscience" shares no better fate. Has not the great Vauvenargues, "one of the noblest and purest of moralists," subjected it to searching analysis, under which it has been shown that it is "more misleading than reason or nature." No more remains to be said. Churches must give way to secondary schools, and though

* *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1882, p. 695.

clergymen may be allowed to hold their places as public officers, it is absurd to suppose that any importance attaches to the opinions they teach or the kind of ritual they celebrate.

Now Clericalism of this character is surely the most offensive of all. When a man believes himself to be one of a priestly order, invested with special authority and charged with a distinct office to fulfil in the world, his pretensions, however offensive they may be to the consciences of others, may find some excuse in the fact that they are in harmony with his own convictions; and that however painful it may be to him to have to wound the feelings of others, he must do even that rather than be false to his own conscience. He is at all events asserting not a mere individual pretension, or even the assumed right of the State to undertake the religious care and supervision of its subjects, but the Divine right of the Holy Catholic Church. That right is a mere figment, opposed equally to the spirit of Christianity and the direct teaching of the New Testament; but to him it is a reality which his faith accepts, and for which his conscience bids him to contend. His principle of necessity makes him illiberal and exclusive; but though there may be more of the show of charity on the part of the Erastian, there is as little of the reality. He will tolerate any difference in doctrinal opinion, even though it go to the length of setting aside doctrine altogether; for the simple reason that in his view a creed is a matter of little importance, if indeed it be anything more than a bundle of superstitions, which must be tolerated out of consideration for the unfortunate weaknesses of men, educated in the obsolete traditions of past generations. The rights of the Church, of the Bible, even of the Saviour, are readily surrendered by him, and consequently there is no severity shown towards their assailants. But when the supremacy of the State and

the authority of the institution to which it is pleased to give the name of a Church are questioned, there is a very different feeling evoked. The one offence which the Erastian cannot forgive is the assertion of the independence of the Church. If, indeed, dissenters from the national establishment of religion are content to accept the humble position which alone becomes them, if they will suppress their own deepest convictions relative to the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, and the way in which that principle is violated by the State Church, if they will be "nonconforming members of the National Church," instead of avowed dissentients from all its principles and methods, they will be treated with courtesy and kindness. But loyalty to conscience on questions which, in their view, touch the deepest things in the life of the Church is sometimes pitied as a weakness, sometimes reprobated as a sin against charity, always resented as an offence.

XIII.

Against both these forms of Clericalism, Congregationalism is a protest. It is true that its distinct antagonism to State Churches has been of comparatively recent development. The purely Erastian ideal with which we have become familiar in this generation, which makes light both of creed and polity, and attaches supreme value to State sanction, was not known to the first Congregationalists, but would certainly have been regarded by them with intense abhorrence. How far they saw the full result of their own teachings in their bearings upon the relations of State and Church is open to considerable doubt; but it is clear that their principles were inconsistent with the existence of any national establishment which had the faintest chance of existence. The idea of a "gathered Church" was directly opposed to the identification of the nation with the Church, and this was made suffi-

ciently apparent in the contentions of the first Congregationalists. They never sought to conceal their belief that neither a nation nor a parish, *quâ* nation and *quâ* parish, could be a church. Robert Browne, at the very beginning of the movement for the restoration of primitive Church polity, protested first against the national idea of the Church, and consequently against the authority claimed for the bishops as rulers of that National Church. Not only did he refuse to seek license for preaching from his bishop, but when his brother obtained the letters for him, he absolutely refused to avail himself of them, openly proclaiming that he preached "not as caring for or leaning upon the bishop's authoritie, but onlie to satisfie his dutie and conscience." The basis of his whole teaching was, "that the kingdom off God was not to be begun by whole parishes, but rather off the worthiest were they never so fewe." This conclusion was not reached at once, but it was the truth after which he was feeling, long before he discerned it in its full beauty and far-reaching significance.

The charges which were brought against Greenwood and Barrowe show that their teaching was to the same effect as that of Browne. In the "Briefe of the positions holden by the new societie of recusants," which, as Dr. Dexter tells us, "was supplied to each Inquisitor," that is, to every member of the Commission appointed to try them are the following :

"4. That the Church of England as it is now established is no entier member of the Church of Christ."

"8. Manie of them make scruple to affirme that the Queens Majestie hath supreme auctoritie to govern the Church of England in cases ecclesiasticall, and to make laws ecclesiasticall, not contrary to Christa lawes."

"10. That if the prince or maiestrate under her doe refuse or defer to reforme such faults as are amisse in the Church, the people may take the reforminge of them into theire owne hands, before or without her auctoritie." [This is the Reformation without tarrying which was one of the watchwords of the party.]

"12. That the Church of England as it now standeth by law established, professeth not a true Christ, nor true religion, that it hath no ministers in deed, nor sacraments in deed."

These are the allegations of their enemies, but the examination of their own books, as well as of their answers to those who undertook to try them, will show that any objection to this statement must lie against its form rather than its substance. These men suffered martyrdom because they maintained the sovereign rights of Christ in His own church. How far they would have demanded or accepted the revenues of the State for the Church was a question that could not practically arise. They might, or might not, hold that sovereigns should be the nursing fathers of the Church, but as these rulers were not to be permitted to exercise authority in it, it is certain they would not accept the function. Whether the teachers knew it or not, their theory of a church was fatal to the existence of a national establishment. Very possibly many of them would have been shocked at such a suggestion. They were coming out of thick Cimmerian darkness, and had the full blaze of light at once burst upon them they would have been dazzled and overpowered. But the truth was there, though they may have failed to discern it. The one form of Establishment which the State will never accept is that which leaves Government no other duty except the patronage of a spiritual society which maintains an independent autonomy. Like the individual, the Church cannot serve two masters—it cannot serve God and Mammon. It may barter away Christ's right for wealth and titles and authority, or it may assert, at all costs, its Master's authority. Both it cannot do. Whether both the fathers of Congregationalism had learned the lesson or not was of little practical importance, since the temptation thus to reconcile two incompatibles never presented itself to them.

That they had formed a true estimate of the " Clericalism " against which they had to contend is manifest from a curious passage in the trial of Barrowe.

" The Lord Chancellor asked me if I knew not those two men, pointing to Canterbury and London. Barrowe : ' Yes, my Lord, I have cause to know them.' Lord Chancellor : ' But what, is not this the Bishop of London ? ' Barrowe : ' I know him for no Bishop, my Lord.' Lord Chancellor : ' What is he then ? ' Barrowe : ' His name is Elmar—Aylmer, my Lord.' (The Lord pardon my fault that I laid him not open for a wolfe, a bloody persecutor, and apostate. But by this time the Warden's man plucked me up.) "

If Barrowe had been surprised by the question relative to Aylmer, and reproached himself for want of fidelity, he took care not to be betrayed into the same error in relation to the Primate. His language is very strong, but let those who are so ready to condemn him because of it remember that his harsh words were provoked by still harsher deeds. Critics sitting in their own studies, and exercising their very judicial minds there, find it easy to write with leniency of the fierce bigots who, in the name of Christ, were seeking to crush men whose one fault was their earnest desire to do the will of Christ. But the victims of this cruel despotism, who were interrupted in their Christian services, dragged from their peaceful homes, thrust into loathsome prisons, menaced with bonds and torture by these Christian Bishops, may well be forgiven if they adopted language which, to the ears of polite dilettantists in these days of peace, may have a harsh and even grating sound. The Primate was Whitgift, deservedly offensive to the unhappy sectaries whom he harassed and persecuted.

Lord Chancellor : ' What is that man ? ' (pointing to Canterbury.) Barrowe : The Lord gave me the spirit of boldness, so that I answered, ' He is a monster, a miserable compound. I know not what to make him : he is neither ecclesiastical nor civil, even that second Beast spoken of in the Revelation.' Lord Treasurer (Burleigh, who,

be it remembered, was a friend of Robert Browne's, and disposed to treat these sectaries, whose loyalty to their Queen he rightly appreciated, with considerable leniency, and perhaps was not sorry of a sly hit at the Bishops): 'Where is that place, show it?' Barrowe: So I turned to the thirteenth chapter, and began at the eleventh verse, and read a little. Then I turned to 2 Thess. ii. But the beast arose for anger, gnashing his teeth, and said, 'Will you suffer him, my Lord?' So I was plucked up by the Warden's man and carried away.'

This was plain speaking, but men smarting under the sense of cruel wrong are not likely to prophesy smooth things. The extreme utterance of these noble confessions certainly do not awaken in us a desire to forget our descent from these sorely-tried but godly and devoted men. The High Church writer, to whom reference has already been made, fancies that in claiming descent from the Puritans rather than the sectaries, Congregationalists show that they are ashamed of their true ecclesiastical ancestors, perhaps because of this roughness of speech. We have not fallen so far below our true manhood as to disown our despised and persecuted fathers because they had not learned the graces of courtly speech, or the virtue of a safe moderation. We claim a place in the great Puritan family, but the Separatists are, as already said, our direct progenitors.

There is a general use of the term Puritan, by which it is employed to designate the whole party of advanced, we might say of real, Protestantism in this country. There is a more narrow and technical sense which restricts it to the class who were bent on the reformation of the Anglican Church, and who remained in its communion in the hope of conforming its constitution and teaching to their own ideal. Between this party and the sectaries there was that kind of antagonism which is very apt to arise between hesitating and decided reformers, whether in Church or State, but nevertheless there was

a certain affinity. In some cases men became Puritans and remained so, in others they passed through the stage of Puritanism to the more advanced position of the sectaries. Others of the sectaries, again, never halted in Puritanism at all, but passed at once into the more logical and free position of absolute independence. A very remarkable illustration of the relation between the two is supplied by Francis Johnson, the pastor of the first Congregational Church that was founded in London after the scattering of the martyr Church, of which Richard Fitz was the pastor. Johnson was a Puritan and minister of the Church of English merchants at Middelberg, of which Cartwright and Dudley Fenner had previously been pastors. While there he discovered that the reply of Greenwood and Barrowe to Mr. Giffard's short treatise against Donatists, which was an offensive name for Congregationalists, was being printed at Dort.

"Bringing it to the notice of the authorities, he was made the ambassador's instrument to intercept them at the press, and see them burnt; the which charge he did so well perform as he let them go on until they were wholly finished, and then surprised the whole impression, not suffering any of them to escape; and then, by the magistrate's authority, caused them to be wholly burnt, himself standing by until they were all consumed to ashes. In the very midst, however, of his jubilant consciousness of a duty to truth and righteousness thus effectually done, he was indiscreet enough to make one mistake, which not only cost him in the end a good deal of money, but which radically modified the entire remainder of his earthly life. He saved two copies from the flames, which marketed the balance of the edition, 'one to keep in his own study, that he might see their errors, and the other to bestow on a special friend for the like use.' Having concluded his bonfire and carried the two books home, something—one would not wonder if it might be some spasm of sympathy for authors whom he had cruelly disappointed and wronged when they were working at such fearful disadvantage—something led him to open one of these two books. Superficially glancing here and there, he met at last with a passage that touched his heart, and he sat down carefully to read the whole. He rose up a staggered and well-nigh a convinced man. The least he could do for his own peace of mind was to lay down his

comfortable charge and take ship for London; where he sought out Barrowe in the Fleet prison and talked with him, until he became thoroughly persuaded that the book was right, and that it was he himself who had been in the wrong. So he 'never returned to his place but adjoined himself to their society at London.' " *

It is Francis Johnson the sectary, rather than Francis Johnson the Puritan, who is one of the founders of Congregationalism. Ashamed of an ancestor like Johnson! We should have been, and should have reason to be, if we had known him only as the well-to-do pastor of the Puritan Church in Middelberg, who, though he had himself suffered persecution in being expelled from the university and afterwards imprisoned for his Protestant opinions, did not hesitate to lend himself to the detection and suppression of what was heresy to him. But for Francis Johnson the earnest searcher for truth, the manly Christian who had sufficient wisdom to detect his error and sufficient courage to acknowledge it, the daring Separatist who boldly severed himself from the Church of his time and became the pastor of what was branded as a schismatic community, we have only admiration and respect. We leave it to our critics to blush for ancestors, Latimer, Ridley, and others, Bishops of their own Church, of whom, in truth, they are not worthy. If we call ourselves the descendants of the Puritans, it is not that we are forgetful of the closer tie which binds us to the sectaries, but because we believe that the principles which gave abiding strength to the Puritan movement were those which were common to its promoters and the Separatists.

The sectary was the more logical Puritan; possibly more courageous, decided, and uncompromising also. The High Churchman of more philosophic views, especially if he is not writing with the unworthy purpose of dis-

* Dexter's *Congregationalism as seen in its Literature*, p. 264.

crediting ecclesiastical opponents, recognizes no difference between them. Professor Blunt classes not only Puritans and Separatists, but even the more independent members of the Anglican Church, in the same category. Wycliffe, Tyndale, Latimer, were as much members of the Anti-Church party as Browne and Greenwood, Johnson and Penry, Barrowe and Robinson. To the whole may be given the general name of Puritan. It is significant of a mighty force in England which was working for liberty and progress ; for freedom in the State and spirituality in the Church. Among its members were great diversities of opinion, such as must always be found where there is independence. In stolid and unreasoning Conservatism alone can there be uniformity, and even there it is not always easy to maintain it in opposition to the powerful forces of individualism which are ever threatening to burst the restraints which have been imposed upon them. Life means movement, and movement implies variety. So has it been in this great Puritan party, which has been identified with all the freedom that has been won for the nation, and foremost in all the struggles by which it has been secured. Congregationalism has formed one important element in that force, but the most despised, the most calumniated, the most persecuted, and yet the most consistent and devoted and self-sacrificing of the party, are the truest representatives of its great principles.

The character of English Nonconformity has indeed been tested by tribulation, and it has not been found wanting. On Congregationalism, indeed, has been laid the heaviest cross, since its sons have been called to suffer death for the principles for which they lived ; while they have not had the poor compensation which despotism sometimes gives to its victims, when the sons build the sepulchres of those whom their fathers slew. The martyrs of English Congregationalism, who died rather than be dis-

loyal to Christ as the King of His Church, are forgotten—hardly remembered even by those who have inherited their name and principles. To none can the words of Cowper be more fitly applied :

“ Their blood was shed
In confirmation of the noblest claim—
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
To walk with God, to be divinely free
To soar and to anticipate the skies.
Yet few remember them. They lived unknown
Till persecution dragged them into fame
And chased them up to heaven. Their ashes flew—
No marble tells us whither. With their name
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song ;
And history, so warm on meaner themes,
Is cold on this.”

But their work has not perished, and their spirit still lives and works. In the recollection of their toils and sufferings, their heroic confession and patient endurance, Congregationalism may well feel that it is not without one at least of the distinctive marks of the true apostolic succession. Taking the words of Paul, it may say, “ Let no man trouble me ; for I bear branded in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” Like the great and good of all times, our fathers—Puritan, Separatist, Congregationalist, Nonconformist—had to suffer affliction, and they won for themselves a good report “ by faith.” By faith, Richard Fritz and his little company, led in a way which they themselves knew not, went forth out of the Church of their fathers, not knowing whither they went, and sojourned in the prison, where they gathered as heirs of the one promise and subjects of the One King in Zion, daring to call themselves a Church of Christ, and strong to suffer and to die for Him. By faith, Robert Browne opposed himself to the force of a powerful hierarchy and a persecuting State, that he might revive a forgotten ideal and testify to a despised truth. By faith, John

Robinson led forth a true-hearted, noble company, who were content to forsake the homes they loved so well and the country for which their patriotic zeal glowed with so pure a fire, and to go forth to strange lands that they might find freedom to worship God. By faith, some of that devoted band crossed that dark and stormy ocean, clothed then in a terror and mystery, unknown now that it has become the great highway of the nations. By faith, they planted on Plymouth Rock the flag of liberty, and laid the foundations of that noble republic which has since become a foremost champion of freedom, and hand-in-hand with England, kindred in race, in language, and religion, is pressing onward in the van of all civilization and progress, commercial enterprise, and religious influence. By faith, Copping and Dennis and Thacker, Barrowe and Greenwood and Penry died for the rights of the King in His own Church, counting not their own lives dear that they might win Christ. By faith, Penry, when he was dying, was filled with a passionate longing for the salvation of his beloved fatherland, and bequeathed to Wales words of wisdom and inspiration which bear fruit now; for if John Penry is dead, John Penry's spirit is still marching on. By faith, the two thousand victims of a new Bartholomew left their pulpits, their pleasant manses, their beloved people, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the honours of which the State offered to those who would worship at its shrine. By faith, not a few of them endured the trial of cruel mockings from the brutal judge who sullied his ermine and disgraced the judgment-seat by the truculence of his bigotry, the insolence of his bearing, and the cruelty of his sentence. By faith, John Bunyan suffered bonds and imprisonment for Jesus Christ, and in the solitude of his prison and the bitterness of his agony dreamed those wondrous dreams which have cast a spell on following

generations, and quickened multitudes by that inspiration with which they themselves were quickened of God. What shall I more say? Time would fail to tell of all the confessors and sufferers, the heroes and the heroines who out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant to fight, and turned to flight the armies of aliens. They may be called Separatists, but a Church with such a lineage is able to speak with its enemy in the gates.

XV.

No term could be more inappropriate than that employed by Professor Blunt, when he describes us as the "Anti-Church party." Our ideas of the prerogative of the Church are as exalted as his own. We hold the authority of the Church to be supreme in its own sphere; but we differ from him as to the Church, as to the sphere over which its rule extends, as to the foundation on which its authority rests. Our contention is that every society of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, united together for fellowship, worship, and work, is a Church, and that in it all the authority which belongs to a Church is vested. It needs not any of the fancied notes of Catholicity, so long as it bears about branded on it the marks of the Lord Jesus. It does not depend on any hierarchy to give it sanctity or completeness. The power it possesses no prince or prelate can confer, and none can take away. It is a power which does not accrue from some natural right belonging to its members separately, or in their corporate capacity, but comes directly from the presence of Christ Himself in accordance with His own promise. Christ is wherever His saints meet in His name, and the presence of Christ makes the Church, and gives its decision validity and force.

Congregationalism is not a contention for the rights of men, but for the supremacy of Christ. It is, looked at

on one side, a spiritual democracy, but the spirituality is as essential to the idea of the system as the democracy. It refuses to recognize the existence of the priest or the jurisdiction of the prince in the Church, not merely because either of them would encroach on the liberties of men, but because they would invade the prerogative of Christ. Where He is recognized as Priest and King, there can be no place for mere human pretenders to His office. Hence there follows, no doubt, an equality, but the basis of that equality is a common relation to Christ.

XVI.

It is sometimes charged against Congregationalists that they are untrue to their fundamental principle, and that their ministers exercise a tyranny over the people. If it were so, it were a grievous fault, and grievously will they have to answer for it. Priestism, intolerable everywhere, is most of all unendurable in the minister of a free Church based on the principles for which Congregationalism has always contended. The charge is strangely inconsistent with another which is still more frequently urged, that the ministers are the slaves of the people; but the one serves to explain as well as to neutralize the other. Faults so opposite can hardly both be the legitimate product of the one system, even though both may be found in its working. They may be traced rather to the human nature which is the same under all forms of government. Idiosyncrasies are not to be effaced by the action of any system, and the feeble and dependent spirit may develop subserviency under the same conditions which in a man of different temper would call forth arrogance and dictation. In both cases the real question is, whether the man has acted in accordance with the system or in opposition to it.

A Congregational minister may be high-minded, dictatorial, self-assertive, as other men may be; but he cannot

become a priest or even a ruler without a flagrant violation of the principles of the system, and without a gross dereliction of duty on the part of the Church to which he ministers. A despotism may be founded on a democracy; but, except in cases where force is employed, the fault rests with the democracy as much at least as with the despot. It is quite possible, however, that the cry against priestly tyranny may be raised too readily. A pastor must be a leader, and every true leader of men must have a definiteness of purpose and a strength of will, which are very easily mistaken for other and worse qualities. There are few real leaders against whom the charge of haughtiness, or arrogance, or overbearing temper is not sometimes brought. The Christian minister ought, of all men, to be least open to such accusations; but even when he is most gentle at heart he is sure to expose himself to them, if he be earnest and energetic. The very elements which constitute his strength may indeed become his reproach, and the intensity of zeal, the clearness of perception, the singleness of aim, which give decision and force to his work, and which, it may be, sometimes make him too impatient of contradiction, and too eager in action, be imputed to a self-will altogether alien to his character. Incidents of this kind are sure to occur, because human nature remains human nature, whatever the Church system under which it is trained.

But even the most aspiring and energetic man cannot become a priest in a Congregational Church. He is not, and does not profess to be, one of a sacred order, and if there are now and then those who would fain revolutionize the scriptural idea of the Christian ministry, and give themselves the airs of a special class, there is sure to be sufficient strength to rebuke such shallow pretensions. In no system could they be so mischievous, as in none would they be so utterly incongruous, as in Congregationalism. But if such a power is to develop itself at all,

it must be by the action of the people themselves; "We have no such custom," for we know no man who has a right to hold office except by the consent of the Church itself, and no office to which belongs any authority except that which commends itself to the hearts of men by its agreement with the will of Christ. The minister has to expound and, as representative of the Church, to administer the law of the Divine Master, but only as he carries with him the intelligent and independent convictions of those whom he has to teach and lead has he any power at all. He is not a member of a hierarchy, the strength of which is behind him. He does not boast of a mysterious succession to some spiritual prerogative, handed down to him through a long line of predecessors endowed with apostolic authority; he does not profess to have some mystic grace residing in sacraments which he can give to the obedient or refuse to the rebellious. He is there simply as a minister of Christ, and the men with whom he is associated and over whom he is, are ministers of Christ equally with him, though working in other spheres. If they permit him to assume another character, to dictate where he ought to teach, to command on his own authority when he ought only to lead into the ways of Christ, to surround himself with a peculiar sanctity and gather into his hand authority little short of the Divine, on them rests the responsibility as much as on him. Congregationalism knows no priesthood except that of the whole Church of Christ, but Congregationalists may make priests unto themselves. A very poor and pitiable priesthood it is wherever it is found, without traditions, without dignity, without force to sustain its pretensions; but such as it is, it is as often manufactured by the devotee as it is usurped by the priest, and whatever made it, a breath will at any hour unmake.

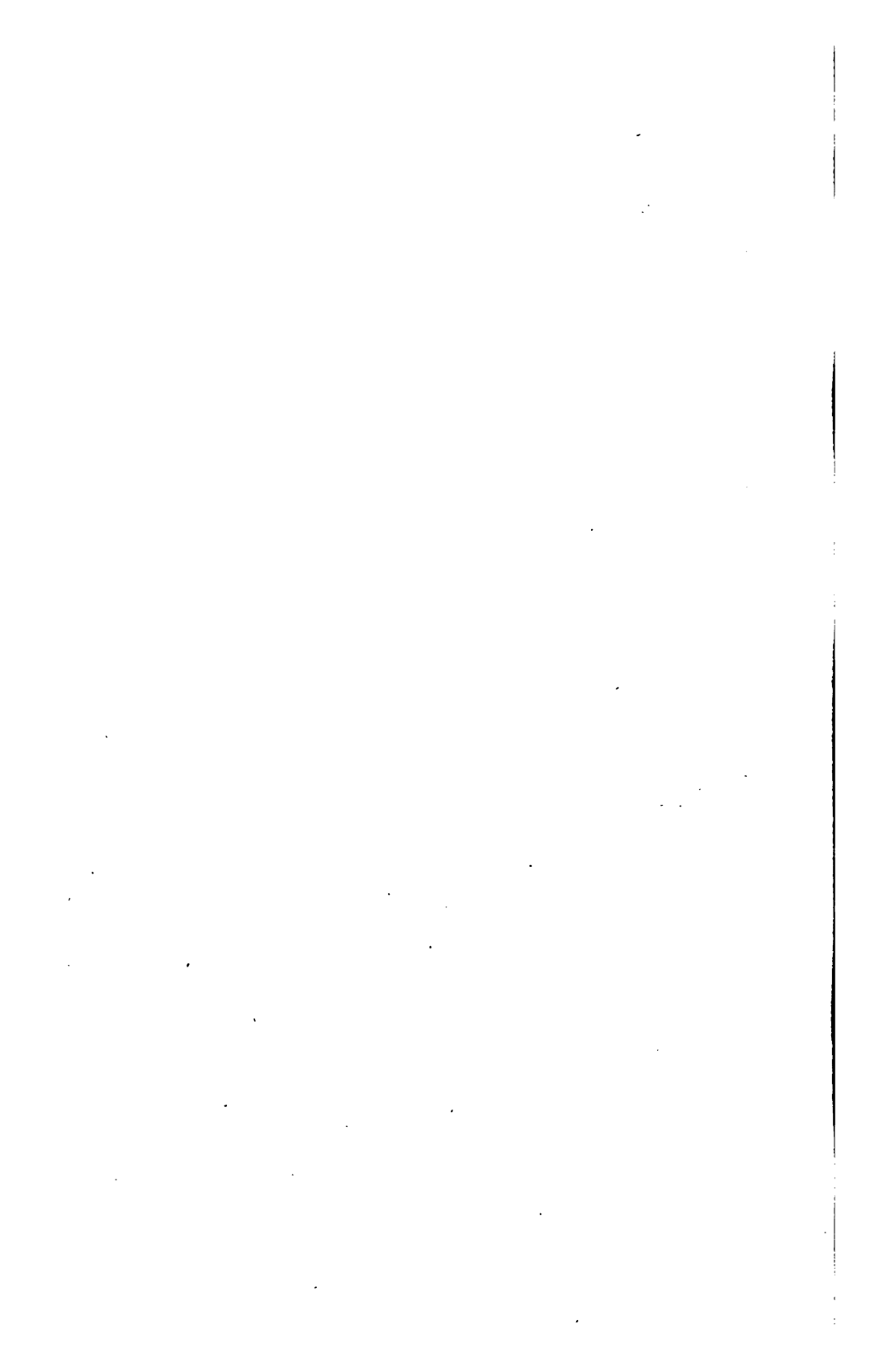
In the Congregational churches, however, there is perhaps quite as much danger of suspecting Clericalism where

it is not, as of resisting it where it really is. About a number of outward trifles to which some attach exaggerated importance, the safest principle is *de minimis non curat lex*. The law which the apostle lays down in relation to the observance of days may be safely carried out in relation to titles and dress, so long as there is in them nothing of a symbolic character. It is a great mistake to suppose that those who cling to old habits on these points have any sympathy with clerical ideas. Conservative instincts govern some, æsthetic tendencies affect others, considerations of convenience influence still more. By all these the questions are treated as matters of expediency, not of principle; and if it could be shown that principle was at stake—that a “white tie” even was retained as a rag of clericalism or sacerdotalism, many of them would be eager to renounce that for which they now contend. It may be possible to show that even when judged solely by the law of expediency they are wrong; but even though this were so, they would not thereby be convicted of a leaning towards Clericalism, with which, in truth, they have no sympathy at all. The case would be altered were forms and robes, at present treated as matters of indifference, sought to be imposed by any authority. Then forbearance and tolerance would cease to be virtues, and resistance would become a positive duty.

There are not a few, however, who, in their antagonism to Clericalism, would quarrel with ideas or usages which, whether they be right or desirable or not, have certainly no relation to any priestly theory. Thus a loud cry has been raised about lay-preaching by some who are quite unconscious that underlying their own contention lies that very clerical idea against which they are so earnestly protesting. Congregations are blamed because they are so unwilling to listen to those who are called “lay” preachers. But why? If the sermons of these good men

are not of a kind to impress or instruct or stimulate their audiences, why should the congregations be forced to listen to them? Are these "lay-preachers" themselves a clergy, whose sermons must be accepted by the people, whether they like them or not? Everything depends on the ground of the dissatisfaction with this "lay" preaching. If it is because it is the work of unofficial men, the spirit which prompts so weak an objection cannot be too strongly condemned. If it be simply because of preference for another style of teaching, it is hard to see why it should be condemned. Our contention against Clericalism is not a contention against diversity of gifts or variety of office, but solely against the exclusiveness of an order and the usurped prerogative of a priesthood. In denying the right of any body of ministers to reserve to themselves the privilege of preaching the gospel of Christ, we do not, on the other hand, assert that every member of the Church is meant to be a preacher. We can heartily say, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets;" but we do not by this imply that all are already fit to be prophets. The controversy is really one which among Congregationalists does not touch the theory of Clericalism. They are thankful to hear all who are able to teach, whether they be ministers or not, but they object to have forced on them those who are not able, simply because they are called laymen. It is a question not of official right but of personal fitness. Here and there those may be found who stand too strictly upon what they regard as ministerial rights; but in this we see only another sign of that weakness of human nature which no system can wholly cure. It is the distinction of Congregationalism that the system contains in itself the most efficient of all checks, in that it recognizes the equality of all its members as brethren in Christ Jesus. But freedom may be trusted to correct such defects, and it is as true of it as of wisdom, that in the ultimate issue it will be justified of all its children.

Finally, there are in the age many tendencies, which, if Congregationalism be true to itself, will certainly secure for it increasing sympathy and support. The impatience of all claims to authority, the independence of thought and temper, the scorn of traditions which had their strength solely in the superstitions which have too long darkened the faith of multitudes and hindered the progress of the gospel, the love of elasticity and freedom which are characteristic of the times—are all on the side of a system which is bound by no authority save that of the Lord Himself. The Church which is to lay hold of the people must be that which is fearless in its pursuit and courageous in its recognition of all truth. It must be free from the hampering influences of precedent or conventionalism, ready to learn from all who have anything to teach in sympathy with all that is enlightened and free, zealous for all righteousness and goodness, because inspired by love to God, and feeling that its one work is to get His will done on earth as in heaven. It is for Congregationalism to strive after this ideal. It has a message to the rising democracy, and special facilities for delivering it with impressiveness and force. But if it has its advantages it has also its difficulties. In the absence of organization there must be a special measure of faith if there is to be power at all. It is its glory, but at the same time it is its difficulty, that no system will so certainly or so rapidly decay in the absence of vital godliness. Its whole theory is built up on the belief in the Divine life in man, and only as that life is cultivated and developed will it have strength for the fulfilment of that high destiny which we believe is before it.



XI.

NONCONFORMITY IN WALES.

BY

HENRY RICHARD, ESQ., M.P.

Contents of Lecture 11.

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NONCONFORMITY IN WALES.

IT is not possible to sketch, however cursorily, the past history and present condition of Nonconformity in Wales without referring to the deplorable neglect to which the country was abandoned, for generations, by those who were responsible for its moral and spiritual interests. But in doing this we must be on our guard against a kind of injustice into which we are apt, sometimes, unconsciously to fall, as though the shortcomings of the Established Church in past ages reflected dishonour or reproach upon the members of that church who live in these days. As we have no right to clothe ourselves in the virtues of our ancestors, and to claim credit for their martyr-like spirit, for their abundant labours, for their sacrifices and sufferings for the truth of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, so neither can we fairly lay at the door of the present race of Churchmen the negligences, violences, and wrongs of what they, I am sure, will acknowledge were "the dark ages" of this church. There are many of our friends of the Episcopal communion in Wales who now acknowledge as freely, and bewail as bitterly as we do, the delinquencies and scandals of the past, and who are working earnestly to make amends for the sins of their ecclesiastical forefathers, and to recover the ground lost through their apathy and unfaithfulness. It must be admitted, however, that they are rather late in the day.

One cannot but regret that so much zeal has not a better field—that is, a field less occupied and cultivated already on which to expend its energies. In many parts of Wales, at least, our worthy Church brethren cannot be inspired by the ambition which fired the apostle of the Gentiles, “to preach the gospel in the regions beyond, and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to their hand.” They must be content with the humbler praise. Other men have laboured, and ye have entered, or are trying to enter, into their labours.

There must be then, first, a brief retrospect of the past. Some worthy Welsh clergymen have maintained, and have tried to prove, that the British Church never succumbed to the authority of papal Rome; that it had a separate origin, and a distinct succession, which never fell into the turbid and impure stream through which the Church of England has derived its ecclesiastical life. But it is a fond and groundless fancy. Of course, we know that there was a British Church in these islands before the Saxon invasion, and that our ancestors were Christians for centuries, while your ancestors, my English friends, were worshippers of Woden, Thor, and Friege, from which you still derive your Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. It is also probable that when Pope Gregory sent the monk Augustine to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, and when that arrogant ecclesiastic claimed authority over the British clergy, they sternly refused to admit his claim. According to tradition their reply to him was in these words: “We will never acknowledge the pretended rights of Roman ambition, any more than those of Saxon tyranny. We owe the Pope of Rome, it is true, as to all Christians, the submission of fraternal charity; but as for the submission of obedience, we owe it only to God, and, after God, to our venerable superior the Bishop of Caerleon-on-Usk.” But, alas! this independence did not last, for, in

the thirteenth century, in the reign of Henry III., we find the Welsh Princes addressing a petition to the Pope, in which they fully recognize his authority as the supreme arbiter between them and the Archbishop of Canterbury, of whose unjust and tyrannical conduct they bitterly complained. And it is very curious to observe that the ground of complaint against the Primate is precisely the same which the members of the Welsh Church have had since so frequently, and, in my opinion, so justly, to urge against episcopal appointments in more recent times. These are the words of the petition: "The Archbishop of Canterbury, as a matter of course, sends us English Bishops, ignorant of the manners and language of our land, who cannot preach the Word of God to the people, nor receive their confessions, but through interpreters." And, indeed, the pretensions of the Welsh Church to be separate from that both of Rome and England are confuted by those very complaints which its members have been so constantly making of alien bishops having been imposed upon them, forasmuch as these alien bishops, certainly deriving their succession through Rome, have for centuries been the only ones through which "the grace of ordination" has been conveyed to the Welsh clergy. Unhappily, the evidence is only too abundant that, whatever might have been the case with the early British Church, the country had for many centuries before the Reformation become thoroughly Popish, indeed, more thoroughly so than England. In proof of this Dr. Rees adduces the following fact. During the persecution of Protestants under Queen Mary, there were in England more than three hundred persons who suffered martyrdom by burning, while we read of only three in Wales—Bishop Farrar, who was burnt in Carmarthen, Rawlins White, in Cardiff, and William Nichol, in Haverfordwest; and, judging by the names, these were most likely Englishmen. And for

many years—indeed, for a whole generation—after the Reformation was established in England, Wales, through the gross neglect of those in authority, was allowed to remain sunk in ignorance and superstition. In the preamble of an Act of Parliament passed in 1568, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, ordering the translation of the Bible into the Welsh language, it is stated that “Her Majesty’s most loving and obedient subjects inhabiting within Her Majesty’s dominion and country of Wales, being no small part of this realm, are utterly destitute of God’s Holy Word, and do remain in the like, or rather more darkness and ignorance than they were in the time of Papistry.” The duty of seeing this translation done was devolved upon the Bishops of St. Asaph, Bangor, St. David’s, Llandaff, and Hereford. But although they were subject to a penalty of £40 each—a formidable sum in those days—if it were not accomplished by 1566, that is, in three years, twenty-five years elapsed before the whole Bible was published in the Welsh language; and that was done, not under the auspices of the bishops, or in consequence of the Act of Parliament, which seems to have always remained a dead letter, but by the piety and patriotism of one man, Dr. William Morgan, vicar of Llanrhaiadr-yn-Mochnant, Denbighshire, whose name should be held in everlasting remembrance. It is only just, however, to say that he acknowledges having received some encouragement and help from Archbishop Whitgift and the bishops of St. Asaph and Bangor.

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the utter, one might almost say the contemptuous, neglect with which Wales was treated during the early years of the Protestant Reformation. I suspect things were bad enough in England in those days. But it is easy to imagine how much worse it would be in Wales, where there was another nation, of a separate race and with a different language, dwelling in

what was then a remote and secluded region, with rare possibilities of intercourse with, and influence from, headquarters, with no public opinion to control or overawe in the slightest degree those to whom the highest destinies of the people were committed. Let me state one or two facts illustrative of the religious state of the country at this time.

In the year 1628, Dr. Lewis Baily, Bishop of Bangor, paid a visit to the different parishes in his diocese. His report of what he found there is still extant, and was published in the *Archæologia Cambriensis*, in 1868. A few extracts from this document will suffice to show the deplorable condition of the Church in those days :

Llanfairpwllgwyngyll and Llandyssilio.—There have been only two sermons in these places for the last twelve months, which were delivered by the rector, Sir John Cadwaladr. [In those days Sir seems to have been the titular distinction of a clergyman just as Rev. is now.]

Penmon.—There has been no sermon here for five or six years.

Llangwyllog.—There is never any preaching here.

Llandeussant and Llanfairynghonwy.—The curate here is Sir John Edwards. Complaints were made that he neglects to read the service and the homilies ; to register births, marriages, and burials ; that he had not delivered a sermon since last Whitsuntide twelvemonth ; that he spent his time in taverns, was a public drunkard and a brawler, and constantly quarrelling with his parishioners and others.

And so on through other counties of North Wales, Carnarvonshire, Merionethshire, and Montgomeryshire. Of place after place it is reported, "there is never any preaching here," or "there have been only two or three sermons in a twelvemonth." Of the clergyman at Aberdaron, in Carnarvonshire, it is complained that he neglected to bury a dead child until Sunday, and when he came to the church he was drunk, and went straight from the service to the tavern. Another is charged with cutting hay in the churchyard and using it as a corn-yard, and keeping his saddles and beehives in the church.

I cannot follow this dreary history, for a history of almost uniform dreariness it is, through the subsequent century or century and a half. There are two names, indeed, among the clergy of the Welsh Church, which shine with surpassing brightness amid the surrounding gloom. I refer to the Rev. Rhys Prichard, the author of the *Welshman's Candle*, who flourished in the reign of James I.; and the Rev. Griffith Jones, of Llanddowror, the founder of the Welsh Circulating Schools, who lived and laboured in the early part of the eighteenth century. But, alas! these solitary lights only serve to reveal the intensity of the general darkness, for none bear more emphatic testimony than they do to the ignorance, superstition, and vice in which the country was sunk, and the all but universal indifference and inefficiency of the clergy. But the melancholy and marvellous thing is, that this state of things was suffered to continue so long. It might have been thought that, when the religious revival broke out about the middle of the eighteenth century, and when not only the Calvinistic Methodists, but all other bodies of Dissenters, were making prodigious efforts to overtake the spiritual wants of the nation, the Established Church would have been roused, if by no better principle, by that of emulation, out of its long-continued torpor. But it was not so. For nearly a hundred years after the beginning of the Methodist revival, and when the Nonconformists of all denominations were labouring incessantly for the evangelization of the Principality, the Church was still settled on her lees. No better proof of this can be adduced than is afforded by the fact that when, so late as the years 1846-48, the Commissioners appointed by the Government to inquire into the state of education in Wales visited that country, they found that, even as respects the condition of the sacred buildings and the mere outward decorum of religious observances, a state of things existed hardly, if at

all, better than that which I have just described to you as prevailing in the reign of James I.

Let me give you a few extracts out of their report and from other sources relating to about the same time :

Kemess Hundred, Pembrokeshire.—The churches of Llandeilo and Maenochlogog are in ruins. In that of Morfyl the panes of the chancel window are all out, the inside of the church wet, as if just rinsed with water ; indeed, it had been, for the afternoon was raining.

Llanafan Fechan, Breconshire.—Mr. Rees James, farmer, who lives close to the church, informed me that Divine service was very seldom performed here, unless there are banns to publish, a wedding, or a funeral.

Llandulais.—This church is a barn-like building with large holes in the roof, evincing every symptom of neglect and discomfort.

Llanfihangel Abergwessin.—No service performed in this church five out of six Sundays for want of a congregation.

Llanfihangel Bryn Pabuan.—Divine service not often performed here, except a wedding or funeral takes place. The vicar rides by on a Sunday afternoon, but seldom has occasion to alight and do duty from the want of a congregation.

Llanfair tref Helygon, Cardiganshire.—The parish church was in ruins many years ago ; the oldest inhabitant does not remember it standing.

Llangybi, four miles from Llanbedr College, has neither doors nor windows. The sacrament has not been administered for *ten* years. Service seldom performed at all. Cows and horses walk into the church and out at pleasure.

Llanfihangel Ar Arth, also near Llanbedr.—Here there was once a chapel of ease ; the stones of its ruins have now disappeared, though a yew tree marks the spot ; and the baptismal font was lately seen used as a pig-trough. Yet the Dissenters have five chapels, and congregations amounting to 1,200.

Llandeilo Abercwylyn.—The incumbent is occasionally obliged to ring the church bell himself ; but sometimes the congregation amounts to two or three persons.

In another parish the vicar has been in the Insolvent Court, and was also suspended for three years for immorality, but allowed to return. He has only a congregation of about fifty, whilst the Dissenters have four chapels, with congregations of about 1,300.

Llandeilo Fach.—No service here for about *ten* years. The roof has fallen down for several years ; but, fortunately, there is a Dissenting chapel with a congregation of about 300.

Llandowror.—This parish is a frightful demonstration of the destruction of the Church in Wales by the present system. About eighty years ago this parish was under the pastoral care of a native Welshman, the excellent and eminent Griffith Jones, renowned for his piety, abilities, and qualifications. This church had then 500 communicants, and people came many miles to attend the service. But this church has now no roof to its chancel, of which it has been destitute several years. The churchyard has neither wall nor fence; sheep were seen standing on the church tower some months ago. In one parish the curate has only of late been suspended, of whom the parishioners said he was "so bad the devil would soon be ashamed of him." The vicar has not preached in this parish for ten years, and lives twenty miles off. He has had the care of the parish since 1812, which is now reduced to the above deplorable state, though formerly, when in other hands, it was quoted as the model parish of Wales.

But even this was not the worst. The character of the clergy down to quite modern times was a still greater scandal. I am loath on this subject, which is a very painful one, to use my own words, or to cite any Nonconformist testimony. There is no need. The acknowledgments of pious members of the Church are abundant and emphatic on this subject. I restrict myself to one witness, than whom a higher one as respects character and qualifications cannot be produced. Lord Aberdare, speaking at the Church Congress in Swansea, two years ago, said :

"Fortunately I was not born in the era of the gross degradation of the Welsh Church which we have heard described, and I believe it has not been too strongly painted; but when I was a young man, the majority of the incumbents in my neighbourhood were men of whom it was not too much or too bad to say that they were indifferent to their duty, leading, some of them, flagrantly immoral lives. My recollection does not extend to days in which my father saw the pastor of the parish led home by two farmers from the public-house, with his face to the horse's tail; but I do remember a time when the immense majority of the Welsh clergy were, I do not scruple to say, utterly unfit for the sacred duties imposed upon them. Where they were respectable there was a want of feeling and sympathy with the people, and the consequences were what might be expected."

And the Rev J. Powell Jones, Hon. Canon of Llandaff,

in an article published in the *Churchman*, in July, 1880, quotes these words of Lord Aberdare, and adds this emphatic testimony of his own :

"This is a sad picture, but it is true ; the immorality of the clergy at one time was proverbial among the people ; it produced on their minds an impression, which they imbibed with their mother's milk, that true piety could not thrive within the pale of the Church ; and it was one of the chief causes of their alienation from her communion ; it was a sore evil ; like a moth fretting a garment, it ate up the strength of the Church, and paralyzed her efforts for good when she awoke to a sense of her responsibility and arose to the fulfilment of her mission ; like the plague of leprosy, it was deeper than the skin ; it took a long time, and required strong measures, to effect its cure ; but remedies were applied and answered the purpose ; the work of renovation has shown itself in nothing more clearly and effectually than in the intellectual and moral improvement of the clergy."

I am bound to say, in justice to the native clergy and to the lay members of the Welsh Church, that the chaos of misrule and disorder which thus prevailed was owing to the atrocious policy adopted and pursued by those political authorities in England who represented the Head of the Church. For, to aggravate the evils of all kinds already sufficiently rife in the Welsh Church, the English Government, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, adopted the practice of appointing Englishmen, utterly ignorant of the Welsh language, to Welsh bishoprics. For a hundred and fifty years, it is alleged, not a single Welshman was raised to the Episcopal Bench in his own country. This continued until twelve years ago, when Mr. Gladstone, breaking through the evil custom, insisted upon finding and appointing a thorough Welsh-speaking clergyman to the diocese of St. Asaph. I suppose this practice was adopted from some blundering idea of policy in the hope of extinguishing the Welsh language, and thereby promoting the more complete amalgamation of the two peoples. It utterly failed as a policy, as it richly deserved to fail. But what a startling illustration does it afford of the supreme folly of governing

a Christian Church according to the maxims of worldly policy ; for the consequence of appointing Welsh bishops was this, that those bishops, imitating the example of those who appointed them, deluged the Principality with English clergymen, their own relatives and connections, to whom the highest dignities and the richest livings were, almost without exception, assigned ; occasioning, as the Rev. Griffith Jones, of Llanddowror, indignantly said, " the monstrosity of the frequent preaching of English to the Welsh people, which is not one jot more edifying, or less ridiculous, than the Latin service of the Papists in France." Indeed, during the eighteenth and far into the nineteenth century, every form of evil that could afflict a Christian Church, or rather, let us say, an Established Church—simony, pluralism, nepotism, absenteeism—grew rampant in the Welsh Church. Even so late as the year 1836, Mr. Benjamin Hall, afterward Lord Llanover, made the following astounding statement in the House of Commons :

" What he complained of most was the unbounded spirit of nepotism which seemed to take possession of some of these English bishops the moment they took up this episcopal power in the Principality. He found that in the diocese of St. Asaph a relation of the late bishop held the following preferments: He was dean and chancellor of the diocese, with the deanery house, worth about £40 a year ; parish of Heullan, £1,500 ; St. Asaph, £426 ; Llan Nevydd, £300 ; Llanvair, £220 ; Darowain, £120 ; chancellorship, from fees, £400—making £3,006. Besides all this, he was lessee of Llandegle and Llanasaph, worth £603, and this all exclusive of the rectory of Cradely, in the diocese of Hereford, £1,200 ; vicarage of Bromyard, £500 ; prebend of Hereford, £50 ; portion of Bromyard, £50 at present, but it is expected on the death of an old life that this preferment will be worth £1,400. Thus he had no less than *eleven* sources of emolument producing between six and seven thousand a year. It appears, also, that his brother had about £3,000 a year, and the total enjoyed by relations of the late bishop of the diocese alone amounts to between seven and eight thousand. But it appeared, moreover, that the amount enjoyed by the bishop, and the relations of the former bishops, alone amounts to £23,679, and exceeds the whole amount enjoyed by all the other resident and native clergy put together ! "

Nonconformist as I am, I thoroughly sympathize with the indignation of the members of the Welsh Church at the monstrous injustice inflicted upon them by these intrusions of English bishops and clergymen ; and that, in the very teeth of the emphatic judgment of the Church herself, as expressed in the 24th Article, that "it is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and to the custom of the Primitive Church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the sacraments, in a tongue not understood of the people."

At the same time, I must utterly demur to the exaggerated influence ascribed by modern defenders of the Welsh Church to this one matter of the appointment of English bishops, as though it were the sole cause of its inefficiency. Some of these gentlemen draw a beautiful picture of a state of things which existed in some golden age, when the British Church—ruled over by native prelates, and including within its pale a whole contented, and well-instructed population—flourished like the palm tree in Lebanon. It is a pretty picture. But it is a purely fancy picture, representing no reality, as there is, unhappily, only too abundant evidence to prove.

I have mentioned these things in order to show that if the Welsh have become a nation of Nonconformists, it was from no wanton revolt against legitimate spiritual authority, from no violent schismatical spirit, from no mere love of change or rooted hostility to the Church ; but because they were driven from sheer necessity, through the shameful and prolonged neglect of their most solemn obligations on the part of those who were officially responsible for their religious interests, to seek elsewhere the succour and spiritual nourishment denied them within the pale of the Church. Nothing can be more explicit on this point than the testimony of the Rev. Griffith Jones, the admirable clergyman to whom I have already referred :

"I must also"(he says)"do justice to the Dissenters in Wales, and will appeal for the truth of it to all competent witnesses, and to all those themselves who separate from us, that it was not any scruple of conscience about the principles or orders of the Established Church that gave occasion to scarce one in ten of the Dissenters in this country to separate from us at first, whatever objections they may afterwards imbibe against conforming. No, sir; they generally dissent at first for no other reason than for want of plain, practical, pressing, and zealous preaching, in a language and dialect they are able to understand, and freedom of friendly access to advice about their spiritual state. . . . The people will not believe that there is anything in reason, law, or gospel that should oblige them to starve their souls to death for the sake of conforming, if their pastor (whose voice, perhaps, they do not know, or who resides a great way from them) will not vouchsafe to deal out unto them the bread of life."

I suppose that for about eighty years after the settlement of the Protestant Reformation in this country, Nonconformity had scarcely any existence in Wales. For John Penry, who laboured so earnestly for the evangelization of his native land, and died so nobly a martyr's death for the same cause, can hardly be deemed a Nonconformist, even had he resided in Wales, which he did not. The first Dissenting church was formed in 1689, at Llanvachos, in Monmouthshire, which was then counted a part of Wales, and is so still, virtually and practically. He had been rector of that place, and, by his abundant labours, not only in his own parish, but throughout a great part of South Wales, had commenced a real religious revival in that portion of the Principality. But when Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury, he was brought before the High Court of Commission and deprived of his living for refusing to read the *Book of Sports*, and for "preaching schismatically and dangerously to the people." A considerable number of able and devoted men followed him, who amid severe and constant persecutions traversed the country, giving religious instruction to the sorely-neglected population. Among these the names of Walter Cradock, Vavasor Powell, Stephen Hughes, and David Jones deserve

grateful and honourable remembrance. During the time of the Commonwealth there was, of course, more liberty of prophesying, the result of which was seen in the fact that, when the Act of Uniformity was passed there were 106 ministers in Wales who were ejected from their livings. These, to some extent, reinforced the Nonconformity already in existence. But in those evil days, when not only the Act of Uniformity but the Conventicle Act and the Five-Mile Act were in full operation, the persecution was very fierce. Ministers were imprisoned, congregations were dispersed, the people who avowed themselves as Nonconformists were spoiled of their goods, were beaten, tormented, and reviled. Mr. Johnes, the author of the *Essay on Causes of Dissent in Wales*, though a Churchman himself, bears honourable testimony to the fidelity and courage displayed in that dark season. "In the times of the Stuarts," he says, "dissent from the Episcopal Church became once more an object of persecution; but the ministers of the Welsh Nonconformists still continued to traverse the wild hills of the Principality, braving all dangers for the sake of their few and scattered followers. Their congregations still occasionally met, but it was in fear and trembling, generally at midnight, or in woods and caverns, amid the gloomy recesses of the mountains." The Rev. Vavasor Powell, one of the first and principal sufferers, gives the following account of his own and fellow-countrymen's sufferings in the year 1660-1661:

"Be pleased now to cast your eye upon the late restriction, which I might well call persecution of the gospel in Wales. To omit mentioning the great wrong done unto many scores, about May and June, 1660, in committing and continuing them in prison without any cause but to fulfil that saying, *Quicquid volumus facimus*. Since that time there hath been very violent proceedings, especially in some counties, where some poor and peaceable people have been dragged out of their beds, and, without regard of sex or age, have been driven some

twenty miles to prison on their feet, and forced (though in the heat of summer, till their feet were much blistered, and they were ready to faint) to run by the troopers' horses, receiving many blows and beatings. Others, in Merionethshire, as if they were brute beasts, were driven into pitfalls, or pounds, where they were kept for several hours, their enemies in the interim drinking in the alehouse and forcing the poor people to pay for it, though they tasted not the drink; afterwards bringing them unto the seaside, and leaving them in the night in danger of being swallowed up by the sea, and blasphemously saying that a dog that was with them was the spirit that led them. Others were committed to prison at pleasure, and kept there many months, and yet their cattle and sheep, to the number of above 600, taken from them and sold. Others forced, when they were called to the Quarter Sessions, to walk in chains, which should not by law, upon any such ground, be put upon them, unless they had attempted to make an escape or break out of prison. Others, who were quietly met together, after their usual manner for many years, to worship God and edify one another, were cast into prisons, without any examination, contrary to the laws of this and other nations."

It is a remarkable fact, reflecting infinite credit on the zeal and patriotism of these good men, that in the disturbed and perilous times between 1641 and 1690, they contrived to publish no fewer than nine editions of the Scriptures in the Welsh language, consisting of about 80,000 copies of the whole Bible, and above 40,000 copies of the New Testament separately.

In regard to the religious condition of Wales from the passing of the Toleration Act to the rise of the Methodist Revival, there has been some divergence of opinion between the Calvinistic Methodists and other Nonconformist bodies. The former are supposed, in order to magnify their own services, to have drawn too dark a picture of the state of the country. I believe the state of the case to be this. For some reasons, which I cannot fully explain, North Wales was then and had been for some generations in a far worse plight, religiously, than the South. The description given by the Rev. Thomas Charles, of Bala, of what he witnessed in North Wales about the middle of

the eighteenth century—and no one who knows his character would doubt the perfect accuracy of any testimony he bore—has been applied too indiscriminately to the whole Principality. In the year 1715 it would appear that there were only ten Nonconformist congregations in the six counties of North Wales, and seven of these were very small. The description given by Mr. Charles's biographer of the moral and religious condition of that part of the country before the rise of Methodism is very dismal :

"Ignorance, recklessness, and every species of evil had spread through the land. The Church ministers were in a most degenerate state, both as to principles and practice, the gentry using no influence in favour of religion or good morals, but themselves giving examples of many kinds of wickedness, the common people sunk in darkness and superstition, and the few Dissenters that remained, generally asleep, in mere formality, and some of them fallen into doctrines and practices equally corrupt. Mr. Charles himself says that 'in his journeys throughout many parts of North Wales he had found the condition of the poor generally so low, as regards religious instruction, that there was scarcely one in twenty in many places who could read the Scriptures, and in some places, after special inquiry, it was difficult to find even one who had been taught to read.'"

I think Dr. Rees, in his *History of Nonconformity in Wales*, has proved, beyond all controversy, that things were not nearly so bad in South Wales. There is positive evidence to prove that, so far back as the year 1715, there were upwards of one hundred Nonconformist congregations there, some with a large attendance and membership, and displaying manifest signs of spiritual life and activity. There can be no doubt that, to a considerable extent, the soil had been thus prepared for the good seed which Harris and Rowland, and the other early Methodist preachers, sowed with so much diligence and success. Indeed, it is well known that in *some* cases entire churches belonging to the older Nonconformists, and in

many cases their individual members, fell into the broader channel of the Methodist Revival, and helped to swell the strength and volume of the main stream. But after making all these admissions, which ought to be made more frankly and generously than sometimes has been done, the fact will be acknowledged by all, that the great epoch in the religious history of Wales was the rise of the Methodist Revival. Happily, it was not confined to the body from whom it sprang. The contagion of their enthusiasm infected the Independents and Baptists and Wesleyan Methodists. Very marvellous was the rapidity and resistless force with which the sacred fire spread through the Principality, not without resistance, not without great hardship, peril, and persecution. These early Evangelists, who carried the gospel over the mountains and through the valleys of Wales, had to run the gauntlet of a fiery persecution. They were denounced from pulpits, they were waylaid by rowdies and ruffians and beaten almost to death, they were mobbed by the ignorant populace, they were lampooned by scurrilous poets. Indeed, Dr. Rees says that "a full account of the sufferings of the Methodists and Nonconformists in North Wales in the eighteenth century would fill a large volume." But, in spite of all this, "so mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed," that the whole country was gradually subjugated to the power of the gospel, and a more perfect organization of the means of religious instruction and worship grew up among the poor and neglected people of Wales than, perhaps, is to be found in any part of the Christian world.

To give you some idea of the marvellous growth of voluntary Christianity among my countrymen, take this brief record of the multiplication of Nonconformist places of worship within the last 140 years: In 1742 there were only 110 Dissenting Chapels in all Wales. In 1775

they had grown to 171; in 1816 to 998; in 1851, the year of the Religious Census, to 2,826; in 1871 to 3,407; and in 1882 to 3,892.

The growth of the Congregational churches has been as remarkable as any. In 1715 the number of their congregations was 35—the rest of the 100 already mentioned being Presbyterians and Baptists. In 1742 they had grown to 88. After that there is no enumeration on record until 1861, when they had 766, and now they have 1,071.

It is very certain that without these exertions of the Nonconformists a large proportion of the people of Wales would have been left absolutely without provision for their spiritual wants. From the Census of 1851 the following results appeared. The population of Wales, including Monmouthshire, at that time amounted to 1,118,914:

PLACES OF WORSHIP.

Of the places of worship—

The Established Church furnished	1,180
Nonconformists	2,826
Total	4,006

SITTINGS.

Of the sittings (including estimates for defective returns)—

Established Church furnished..	301,897	or 30 per cent.
Nonconformists	692,339	or 70 per cent.

Total 994,236

SITTINGS AND POPULATION.

Assuming, as Mr. Horace Mann assumes, that there should be church accommodation for 58 per cent. of the population, or for 689,569 persons in Wales, the above figures show the following results:

		Sittings.
The Church fell short of this demand by	..	387,672
Nonconformists exceeded the demand by	..	2,770

The Church, that is to say, has provided sittings for only 25 per cent. of the population, while the Nonconformists have provided

sittings for nearly 59 per cent. Voluntaryism, therefore, has alone furnished all the accommodation for religious worship that the whole population of Wales requires. The Established Church has not furnished half the accommodation that the people require.

It is estimated that at present 800,000 of the population of Wales are members, or adherents, of the four evangelical bodies—the Calvinistic Methodists, the Independents, the Baptists, and the Wesleyan Methodists. The Dean of Bangor, in a very able and out-spoken speech at the Church Congress in Swansea, says in reference to this statement: "Statistical apologists will hint that these Nonconformists exist only on paper. But paper adherents do not give money. The Welsh Nonconformists give more than £300,000 a year." I think the worthy dean considerably under-estimates the contributions of the Nonconformists. There are no positive data except in the case of the Calvinistic Methodists, the aggregate of whose collections for 1881 amounted to £157,848. Dr. Rees, after careful calculation, makes the Congregational body contribute £140,000. That makes £297,000. I find that Dr. Thomas, of Liverpool—and there are few more thoroughly acquainted with the Principality—estimates the grand total raised by all denominations at £400,000 a year. But while attending to the religious wants of the people, they have not neglected the work of education, whether ministerial or general. They have, I think, eight colleges for training young men for the ministry, on the building and endowment of which they have expended not far short of £100,000. There are two Normal Schools for training teachers—one at Bangor, and one at Swansea; and, if I mistake not, the larger proportion of the money for establishing both were contributed by the Nonconformists. Towards the University College at Aberystwith, which is, in the strictest sense, a national enterprise, £50,000 have been raised. Of this sixty-seven per cent. have been contributed

by the Nonconformists. But the Nonconformists not only provide their religion for the people of Wales, but also their literature. The Rev. David Williams, rector of Llandyrnog, in Denbighshire, read an extremely able and exhaustive paper at the Church Congress at Swansea, on the periodical literature of Wales, from which I extract the following passage :

"Our Welsh publications number twelve weekly, two quarterly, and eighteen monthly, with a published price varying from 1d. to 1s. 6d. Out of this total the Nonconformists support two quarterlies, sixteen monthlies and ten weeklies, entirely dependent on peasant writers and peasant readers, and, as might have been easily anticipated, have made the Welsh people a nation of political Dissenters. Their numerous and well-written books abundantly sustain their devotional life and the newspapers their political bias. They are particularly strong in periodicals for the young, both for Sunday-schools and home reading. Now, these figures speak for themselves, and the legitimate conclusions are easily deduced. The native Press is almost entirely in the hands of the Dissenters. The adherents of the Church of England in Wales stand in the same proportion to her population as her publications do to those of Nonconformity. Out of thirty-two Welsh periodicals the Church claims the significant number of four—one weekly and three monthlies. This number is the exponent both of her history in the past and her strength in the present."*

So far Mr. Williams, who deals only with the periodical press. But nearly the whole modern literature of Wales is Nonconformist. There are nine Commentaries on the Bible, and nine besides on the New Testament alone, some original and some translated from English, and only two of these were done by Churchmen, and even these were Dissenters when they began their work. There are eight Biblical and Theological Dictionaries, and as many bodies of divinity or systems of theology, and no Churchman, we believe, has had a hand in the production of any one of them. There is a *History of the World*, a *History of Great Britain*, a *History of Christianity*, a *History of the*

* *Report of the Church Congress*, p. 558.

Church, a History of the Welsh Nation, a History of Religion in Wales, all by Dissenters, besides elaborate denominational *Histories of the Calvinistic Methodists, the Independents, the Baptists, &c.* Indeed, all the ecclesiastical histories in the language are Nonconformist, and all the general histories, except the *History of Wales*, by the Rev. Thomas Price, and a small work called the *Mirror of the Principal Ages*. There is a valuable work illustrated by many excellent maps and diagrams, entitled *The History of Heaven and Earth*, treating of geography and astronomy, by the Rev. J. T. Jones, of Aberdare, formerly a Nonconformist minister. There is another large geographical dictionary in course of publication by a Dissenting minister. There are two copious *Biographical Dictionaries*, edited and principally written by Dissenters.

Our friend Mr. Gee, of Denbigh, has published in Welsh an Encyclopædia in eight or ten large, closely-printed volumes, on which he has expended, it is understood, some £20,000. It is studiously free from denominational bias, and was intended to be a great national undertaking, the contributors being indiscriminately selected from the ablest writers of all denominations, the combined learning and talent of Wales being thus engaged in its preparation. The enterprising publisher, at the outset, addressed a letter to all those among his countrymen who had distinguished themselves in any way by their literary acquirements and productions, inviting their co-operation. A list of the contributors was published, amounting to ninety names, and out of these there are certainly not more than nine Churchmen.

But I think I may venture to say that the Nonconformists give not only their religion and their literature, but also their politics, to the Welsh people. I remember the time when the representation of Wales was nearly divided between Liberals and Conservatives, and when

there was not a single Nonconformist to represent that nation of Nonconformists. But in 1867 a number of eccentric and daring people in a borough of Glamorganshire thought this ought not to be, and they determined to try and break through the evil traditions that had so long governed the country. And so they sought and found a man without land, without title, without fortune, without aristocratic or county connections, and, to cap the climax of their audacity and absurdity, a man who had once been a Dissenting minister, and they invited him to come down and speak to them on politics, with the intention, if he passed muster, to bring him forward as candidate for their borough. This piece of unheard-of effrontery produced a great sensation throughout the Principality. It was like throwing a stone into one of the mountain lakes that had slept in stillness for ages; it stirred the waters and the swelling undulations spread, in wider and wider circles, over the whole face of Wales from Cardiff to Holyhead.

And these audacious men in Glamorganshire not only meditated this, but they did it, and not only did it themselves, but they stirred up others to emulation in various parts of the Principality. And so, in 1868, when the election came, Wales, which had been politically almost like the valley of dry bones which Ezekiel saw, felt the breath of life sweep over it; and, when the critical time arrived, the Welshmen arose, stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army. And now, out of thirty Welsh representatives, twenty-eight are Liberals, and nine are Nonconformists.

With regard to the practical points of Nonconformity, we may, I think, refer with just pride to the social and moral conditions of the Principality. In filling the chapels we have emptied the gaols. In some parts of Wales serious crime can hardly be said to exist. Hardly any assize passes without, in one or two counties at least, the judge

being presented with a pair of white gloves, as a symbol of its being a maiden assize without a single prisoner to try. Indeed, some of the judges are beginning to question the necessity of being sent to Wales at all. Mr. Justice Grove, at the winter assize of 1880, addressing the Grand Jury of Merionethshire, said :

“He had to congratulate them and the county on there not being, on the present occasion, a single prisoner for trial. He was told by the high sheriff that there was the same absence of crime at the last assize. At the place from which he had just come—Welshpool—there was no prisoner for trial, and no doubt it was very satisfactory as regards the absence of crime in Wales generally. Whether it was satisfactory to bring so many people from different places together for the mere form of saying publicly that there was no crime in the district might possibly be open to question. He understood that there were 22 present on the grand jury, 48 on the common jury, and 48 on the special jury, the judge and those in attendance upon him, and the high sheriff and his suite, were all brought together for a mere form, which could have been done by writing a letter. It seemed to him a matter worthy of consideration. He supposed that the great object of bringing judges and juries to these assizes was the fear lest there should be an untried prisoner who was waiting a gaol delivery. But whether it could not be done in a more convenient way than in bringing such a mass of people together—and possibly punishing them more severely than the prisoner would have been punished—was a matter which might well receive consideration. It seemed an enormous amount of waste of human labour and human comfort for a very small object.”

Mr. Justice Williams has lately told me that he presided at the last assizes in South Wales, and that in all the five counties of Pembroke, Carmarthen, Cardigan, Brecon, and Radnor there were only two prisoners to try ; one of these was acquitted, and the case of the other was disposed of in half an hour.

And with regard to another point on which it is thought our country is most vulnerable, the question of morality as between the two sexes, I must denounce the grossly exaggerated representations that have been made on that hand as groundless and calumnious. Things are not in

that respect, certainly, what the best friends of Wales are diligently labouring to produce. But I assert, and have elsewhere proved, that, with all our shortcomings, Wales will compare advantageously with almost any part of England. I have said that, in the picture I have drawn, I am far from desiring to make the present race of Welsh Churchmen responsible for the past. Sometimes this has been done, and has provoked great resentment on the part of our Episcopal brethren. But the imputation and resentment are both misplaced. But I think there are two inferences fairly deducible from the story I have told. The first is that the Established Church, regarded as an institution supposed to be founded and maintained for the purpose of providing the means of moral and spiritual instruction for the people, has, in Wales at least, utterly and ignominiously failed; that at no period of its history has it fulfilled, in anything approaching to a sufficient and satisfactory manner, that its primary function as a Christian Church. And, secondly, that the voluntary principle has been triumphantly proved to contain within itself adequate resources to meet the wants of a people thoroughly in earnest. It cannot be denied that the experiment has been made in Wales under circumstances which give it all the force of an *experimentum crucis*. The people for the most part were poor and scattered. They had to contend with the dead weight, or rather, indeed, with the active and, in many instances, virulent hostility of a well-dowered Established Church. From those who might be regarded as their natural leaders, the local gentry, they have had little help and much hindrance. Owing to distance of place and difference of language they were, until quite recently, shut out, to a large extent, from the knowledge and sympathy of their wealthier Nonconformist brethren in England and Scotland. And yet, in the face of all this, behold the result!

I trust the time is not very far distant when all causes of discord between us and our Episcopal brethren in Wales will be at an end, when they will feel, or rather acknowledge, for they have long felt how galling and intolerable is the yoke of State patronage and control under which they have been long groaning, which has inflicted upon them and their forefathers so many wrongs, disabilities, and humiliations, that they will be ready to throw off that yoke, even though it be a little gilded, and enter with us on the enjoyment of the perfect law of liberty. If they are only content to forego the slight but invidious social and political superiority over other Christian communities which their position now secures to them, and descend from that artificial elevation to an equality with their brethren of other denominations, we believe we can promise them an era of greater dignity and prosperity than their church has ever enjoyed. Certainly we could assure them a glad and cordial welcome, without jealousy or reserve, into the fellowship of the other voluntary churches of the Principality as the Free Episcopal Church of Wales.

